

PLUCK AND LUCK

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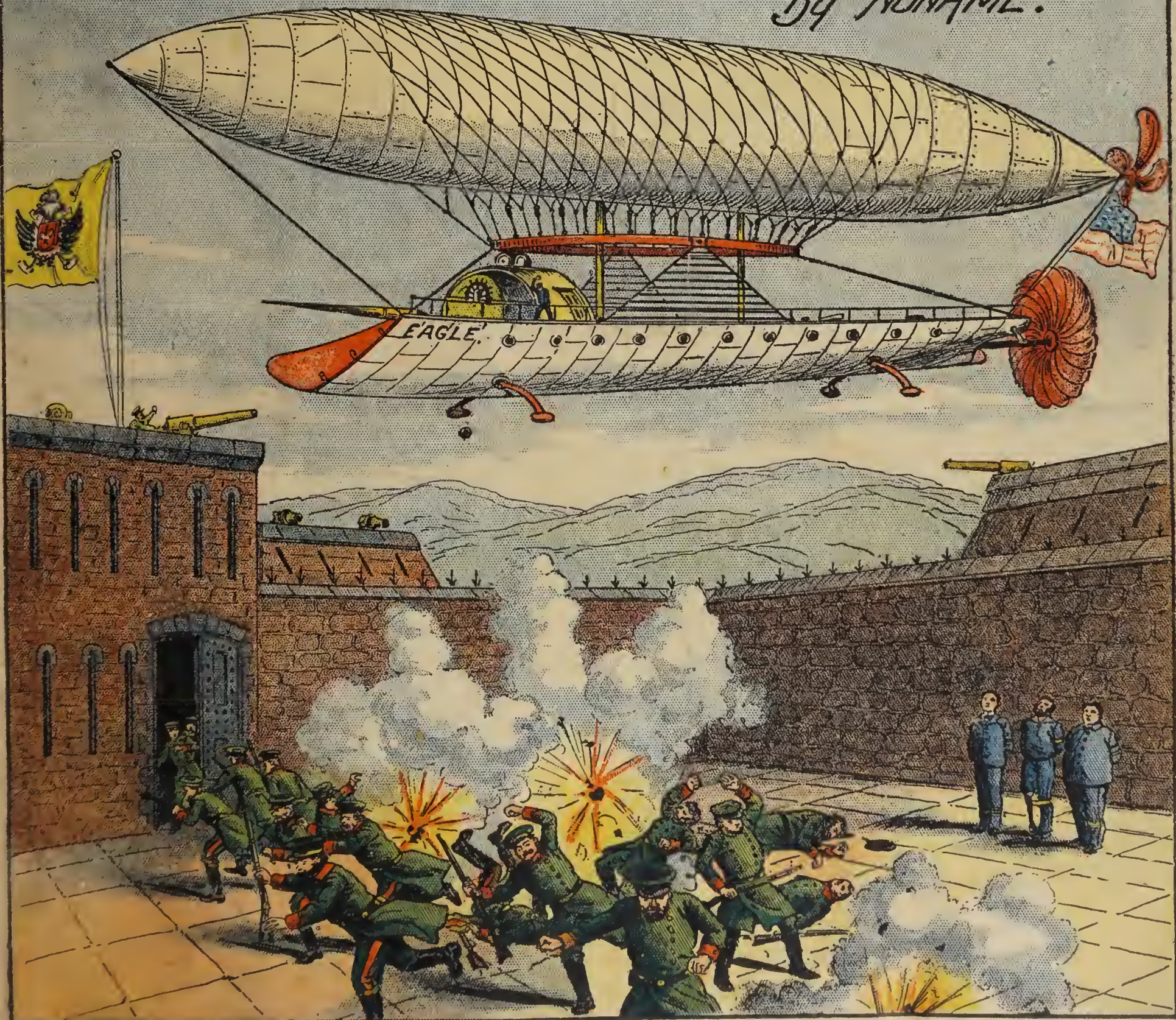
No. 250.

NEW YORK, MARCH 18, 1903.

Price 5 Cents.

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By "NONAME."



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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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DEALER IN CIGARETTES & TOBACCO,
We Sell and Exchange Bonds,
220 East 12th St. Kansas City, Mo.

CHAPTER I.

A TRAGEDY ON THE RAIL.

"Great heavens, Percy Clifton, do not kill me!"

This frantic appeal burst from the lips of a well dressed man with a brown beard and the general appearance of a respectable merchant.

He was desperately struggling for his life on the rear platform of the last car of a train that left New York that afternoon at four o'clock.

The individual he fought with was a madman.

His tall, gaunt figure was clad in black, he had a gray mustache and white hair, his thin face wore an anxious expression, and there burned in his deeply sunken eyes a wild fire that betrayed the derangement of his mind.

Percy Clifton and Roger Harcourt were partners in the banking business.

The only relative in the world that either of them possessed was a son of Clifton, who, a year before, had been driven from home by his father.

This act so preyed upon the old gentleman's mind, and his remorse for the deed was so intense that he became insane.

His partner was a crafty man.

Calculating that as Charley Clifton had been driven away, and Percy was crazy, the business would all fall into his hands, he at once took steps to have his partner incarcerated in a private lunatic asylum.

For this purpose he was then escorting the unfortunate man away.

During the trip, Clifton had left his seat abruptly, and went out on the rear platform of the car, in which there were no other passengers.

Harcourt rushed after him to fetch him back.

But no sooner was he out of the door, when Clifton suddenly sprang at him, grasped him by the throat with both hands, and began to push Harcourt back over the guard rail.

The train was then flying along at the rate of forty miles

an hour, and the scheming man realized that if he once was thrown from the car he would very likely be killed.

Hence his frenzied shout for mercy.

Percy Clifton glared straight into the bulging eyes of his gagging victim with a deadly look, and then cried in hoarse, trembling tones:

"I shall have no pity on you, Roger Harcourt."

"Have you forgotten that I am your best friend?" gasped Harcourt, in strangling tones, for he found that it was impossible for him to shout for help.

"You my friend?" bitterly cried the other. "Bah! Do you think I do not know you are taking me to an insane asylum?"

The remark plainly showed Harcourt that his partner had lucid intervals.

Hence he was yet a lunatic.

"No, no! It was only a pleasure trip!" he gasped, chokingly.

"Liar!" yelled Clifton. "I have yet some reason left! I can thank you for my condition. Did you not poison my mind against my son? Did you not swear to me that he forged my name to a check which you intercepted? In my blind passion I drove him out. But now—now I believe you did it to get rid of him, as you are getting rid of me——"

"You wrong me foully——"

"Silence! You loved Fanny Fairfax, your ward. Her affection was given to my boy. Poor Charley was a dangerous rival for you. But you disgraced him to the girl. Was it her love you wanted, or the money you held in trust for the orphaned girl? Speak, Roger Harcourt, speak!"

He shook his victim violently—furiously.

Harcourt's struggles grew very feeble, and he grew black in the face.

It was impossible to give utterance to more than a few inarticulate sounds, for the sinuous fingers on his throat pressed like a vise.

Clifton had worked himself up to a terrible pitch of excitement.

Overwhelmed by a sudden savage fit, he gave his victim a violent push.

Down to the track shot Harcourt's body.

It struck with a sickening sound upon the sleepers, bounced to the embankment, and rolled down into the gully where it vanished.

Clutching the guard rail, Percy Clifton stood glaring after his victim until the train carried him far away.

He gabbled and mumbled to himself incoherently.

Then the anxious, troubled look crept over his gaunt face again, and he turned around and returned to his seat in the car.

There he remained with his face buried in his hands for half an hour, much as if he were lost in profound thought.

Nor did he budge until the conductor flung open the forward door and yelled in:

"Wrightstown! Last stop!"

Percy Clifton suddenly aroused himself.

He started to his feet and glared around like a dreaming person.

No recollection of the crime he committed remained in his mind.

He drew his derby down over his eyes and left the car with a sober, steady appearance, that would never have betrayed to a soul that his mind was so sadly deranged.

Alighting, he found himself in a beautiful little town surrounding the head of an indentation of the Atlantic seacoast.

The depot agent stood near the station door and Clifton approached him.

"I understand this place is called Wrightstown?" he remarked.

"Yes, sir," said the station agent, respectfully, for he saw that he was talking to an eminently respectable-looking gentleman. "A fisher village, sir, named after Mad Bill Wright."

"Mad Bill?" exclaimed the lunatic, struck by the first word very unpleasantly.

"Yes, sir. He was called crazy because he spent all his time trying to construct a submarine boat. He died before he invented the thing entirely, though, and having an orphan son named Jack, he left the boy to carry out his design. Strangely enough, Jack did perfect the boat. He invented many since, and gained a fortune with them under the sea."

"Remarkable," commented the lunatic.

"I should say so, sir. Besides these boats, Jack Wright has invented the most wonderful overland engines and electrical airships you ever saw. Why, he's the wonder of the world. It's queer to me you don't seem to know him, for his name is in everybody's mouth."

"No, I never heard of him," said Clifton, blankly, shaking his head.

"Well, you will soon, then," laughed the station agent, "for he's just finished building a most extraordinary new electric balloon ship, and is going to make the ascension this evening from his shop in the yard of yonder handsome dwelling, where he lives."

"I suppose that is why there are so many people here now?"

"Yes, sir. The news has attracted them to Wrightstown from all over the country; and I warrant you that it will be a sight worth seeing, as Jack Wright's inventions are the most singular you ever beheld."

"Is he going up alone?" asked Clifton, who seemed to be fascinated by the subject.

"Oh, no. Tim Topstay, an old sailor, and Fritz Schneider, a fat young Dutchman, are going with him. They both live at the mansion with Jack and his wife and child. You see, sir, Tim was in the navy once, and is a good navigator and an awful liar. The Dutchman is an electrician, a cook, and can play the accordion. Tim hates the music and Fritz hates

Tim's yarns. But they all get along very well together. The old sailor came from Sailor's Snug Harbor to live with the young inventor, for he was once a great friend of Jack's father, while Fritz was taken in by Jack while the fat fellow was hunting for a job. They both help Jack to build his inventions and always go with him on the trips he makes in them. By this means they have both become as rich as Jack is, and have a parrot and——"

"Say," exclaimed Clifton, interrupting the garrulous fellow, "do you think this inventor would take me up in his balloon with him?"

"I don't know; you might ask him, sir. He's a generous fellow. And as for courage—why, there isn't a pluckier lad in the world. They have a parrot and a monkey, as I was saying, that always go with them. Tim owns the monkey, and calls it Whiskers, while the parrot belongs to the Dutchman, and is called Bismarek. You see, they caught the bird and beast in Africa the first trip they made, and——"

But, unable to keep track of all the depot agent was gossiping about, Clifton, with a confused look upon his face, suddenly darted away.

He left the depot agent staring after him in amazement.

"He's an eccentric old man," he muttered, as he entered the station.

The ground below seemed to assume a concave appearance.

Percy Clifton rapidly made his way toward the inventor's mansion, for he had made up his mind to ask Jack to let him make the ascension with him in his electric balloon ship.

Ringling the bell, the lunatic was ushered in.

"Is this Prof. Bagley, who Mr. Wright expects from H—— College to go up with him this afternoon?" the girl asked him.

Clifton suddenly saw how he might profit by this error of the girl's.

"Does Mr. Wright know my appearance?" he asked, cunningly.

"Why, no, sir," said the girl. "He never met you in his life. But when he read the letter you wrote him, asking permission to go up, I heard Master Jack telling his wife he had no objections."

"Good! Then I can go, eh?" asked Clifton, with the deliberate intention of impersonating the professor the girl mentioned.

"Yes, sir. They are waiting for you to make the ascension, and I was told to usher you right out to the shop as soon as you came."

"Really. I am sorry I have delayed them," said Clifton, feigning a look of deep contrition. "But it could not be helped. Please lead the way."

The girl conducted him through the house.

Passing out into the handsome garden by a back door, she led him to a big brick workshop standing on the shore of a creek.

In an arm of this building that had no roof there was a door, at which she knocked, and it was flung open by Jack Wright.

He was a bright, dashing fellow, clad in semi-naval costume, his head covered with black hair, his dark eyes keen and flashing, his thin, bony face indicative of the most fearless nature, and his muscles exhibiting the development of extraordinary strength.

"Do you wish to see me?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Here is Prof. Bagley, sir——"

"Ah, glad you've come!" said Jack, quickly, as he grasped Clifton's hand. "We had given you up. But come in! The airship is ready, and it is just striking five—the hour we were to start."

He led the banker into the room.

In the center of the place stood the young man's strange invention.

It consisted of an aluminum boat one hundred feet long, with the rudder at the bow, a row of deadlights along each side, four spring flanges for the boat to rest upon, when on land, and a huge, wide-bladed propeller, aft.

There was a semi-circular pilothouse on the forward deck.

Above the ship there stood a cylinder of aluminum two hundred feet long, twenty in diameter, having both ends pointed, and a propeller at the stern.

A wire network held it to a hollow tube ring which was connected with the ship by means of cables and shrouds.

Two hollow tubes, with valves in them, rose from the mid-ship section of the deck, for operating the balloon, and over the side hung a rope ladder.

Percy Clifton did not say a word to the young inventor as he was led to the ladder, and went up to the deck with him.

His reason for reticence was owing to a fearful struggle he was having to master the feeling of insanity that was fast overwhelming him again.

Jack did not pay much heed to him, however, as his mind was too full of the work he had on hand to notice the man's peculiar manner.

The news of his having made the airship had reached a noted college professor named Bagley, who had written him a letter, requesting the privilege of ascending to make some scientific experiments.

Jack courteously replied to him by letter, consenting to his plan.

But the professor had been unexpectedly delayed.

As Clifton had then made his appearance, and the servant had made the error of thinking he was Mr. Bagley, the young inventor had consequently been deceived, owing to the banker having represented himself as the professor.

Jack led his dangerous guest to a door in the pilothouse, and passing it, they found themselves in a large, finely appointed room, with a small companionway in one corner, leading below by a spiral staircase.

"The cabin is below, professor," said Jack. "You can go below, or stay here, as you like."

"I'll go down to——" replied Clifton, gruffly.

The last word sounded very much like the name of the infernal regions, but Jack failed to hear it, and the banker hastened below.

In the room was a steering wheel, compass, and a number of meteorological and philosophical instruments, air gauges, electro-meters, a switchboard and various other instruments.

Jack approached the front window and grasped the wheel.

He then pulled a valve lever, and moved another that put a powerful air-pump in action down below.

"All ready, boys, we are going up!" he shouted in a speaking tube.

And the next moment the Eagle, as the aerostat was named, soared up through the open roof and shot into the sky like a bird.

A tremendous cheer burst from the throats of thousands of people, who had come for miles to see the ascension, when the airship appeared, and the roar of voices rose to the ears of the young inventor.

CHAPTER II.

ADrift IN THE SKY.

Jack Wright had built his balloon ship for the purpose of making a trip round the world through the air, with his friends, Tim and Fritz.

He was very much excited when the ascension was made, for the Eagle was built upon a principle of ballooning entirely unlike that of any aerial vessel ever before constructed, and he was anxious to see how it would work.

The first principle of the machine was the aluminum cylinder, containing a vacuum. The shell was 1-44 of an inch thick, with an inside frame powerful enough to resist a collapse of the cylinder from outward pressure.

When 3-4 of the air was sucked out of it by a powerful air pump, the pressure of the outer air on the sheeting was 11 plus pounds to the square inch.

The pressure on a total vacuum is 15 pounds to the inch at the earth's surface.

If a body lighter than the amount of water it displaces is put in the sea, it will float there. If a body weighing less than the area of air it displaces is launched in the atmosphere, it will float in space.

These facts are proven by science.

They were the basis of Jack's plan.

The weight of the entire machine was 150 tons.

It displaced a volume of air weighing 276 tons, and therefore had a lifting capacity of 126 tons.

The interior of the cylinder was divided into four compartments, each connected with the outer air by exhaust pumps and valves.

To rise, the air was pumped out; to descend, a quantity of air was let in—sufficient to lower the ship to any altitude from the earth.

All the pumping and locomotive machinery was propelled by electricity furnished by two generators of thirty horse-power each.

But in case of accident to the dynamos, a current could be obtained from 500 auto-accumulators of one-sixth horse-power each.

Jack let the air pump work until he saw by the gauge that there was a three-quarter vacuum in the cylinder.

The Eagle had risen perpendicularly at the rate of twenty feet a second, and the earth rapidly receded from Jack's view.

Although they soon reached a height of 11,700 feet, the young inventor plainly heard the music of a band that struck up a tune when the airship ascended.

At 4,000 feet high he plainly heard the shouting of the spectators.

Jack began to experience an illness throughout his entire system.

A buzzing and pain in his ears commenced and kept increasing, the pain resembling that felt when the head is suddenly immersed in cold water.

His chest seemed dilated, and failed in elasticity, his pulse became quickened, and his lips swelled, his eyes bled, his veins stood out like whipcords, and the blood ran to his head, making his hat feel too tight.

The barometer was at nineteen inches, and the thermometer at zero.

The air had become very rare.

Although the sun had gone down below the horizon when Jack was on earth, as the airship ascended swiftly, it appeared, looking much like a bowl a hundred miles in diameter.

While the earth was cast in twilight, the upper region was in a broad glare of sunlight that made the airship shine and sparkle like silver before the gaze of the spectators below.

Glancing down, Jack was surprised to find that he did not get dizzy as he expected he would, nor did the airship take on the rotary motion on its vertical axis that balloons always assume.

Above the airship floated a mass of clouds toward which she was swiftly ascending.

In a few minutes, as he became more accustomed to the position in which he found himself, Jack recovered from the sick feeling.

"Tim!" he shouted in the speaking tube.

"Ay, ay," came a reply from down below, in gruff tones.

"Come up here, please."

The old sailor ascended the spiral staircase and joined Jack.

He had a short, broad figure, clad in a seaman's garb, one of his legs were gone, from the knee down, a wooden peg being substituted, his bronze face was encircled by a sandy beard, he had a glass eye, and in one cheek held a quid of plug tobacco, of which he was very fond.

"Lord bless yer, lad," said he, in bluff, honest tones, as he glanced out of the window with his solitary eye, "me an' Fritz must a lost our sea legs somehow. Mebbe ye may laugh at me fer a lubber, but dash me tophights if we wuzn't taken with an awful fit of seasickness down in ther eabin. But we're over it now, thank ther Lord."

"I felt sick myself for awhile," admitted Jack. "Will you take the wheel?"

"Ay, now, that I will wi' pleasure. How fer up are yer goin'?"

Until we reach that current of air which has been found to blow constantly around the world from west to east," replied Jack.

"D'ye ealkerlate as it will take us long ter make ther voyage?"

"The earth is about 25,000 miles in circumference. I expect to make 1,000 miles per day. In 25 days we ought to complete the circuit."

"Ge whiz! That's about forty-two and a half miles per hour."

"Yes; pretty rapid traveling, but then we can do better at times, and may eclipse the time I have mentioned, for it is known that there are currents up here, blowing from sixty to ninety miles per hour. Add the speed our propellers will give once we get into such a current, and you'll find that we can go with terrific velocity."

"Wonderful!" said Tim. "Do yer know it reminds me o' ther speed I once traveled at, when I wuz aboard o' ther' ole frigate Wabash, in ther navy."

"Bosh!" said Jack, who did not believe him.

"It's a fact," declared Tim, solemnly. "Yer see it happened this way, my lad: We wuz bombardin' a seaport town, while ther frigate stood ten miles out ter sea. Waal, sir, one o' my messmates was a practical joker, an' while I wuz looking at ther enemy with a binocular, wot should he do but fasten a line ter a cannon ball, an' tie ther other end ter my leg. Then he fired the gun, an' ther fust thing I knew I riz in ther air, an' was towed through the sky by that 'er cannon ball at the rate o' five miles a second. It made me curious to see how fast I wuz a-flyin', so I pulled out my watch, an' observed that I landed just eight minutes arter I wuz blown through ther air, plum in ther town we wuz bombardin'——"

"Hold on there, Tim," laughed Jack. "You said the ship stood off at sea ten miles from the shore where the town stood. Going at five miles a second you would have got there in two seconds, not in eight minutes."

The old sailor looked very sheepish.

He realized that he had stretched his vivid imagination a little too far, and could not very well rectify the error now.

But he assumed a look of virtuous indignation, and growled:

"Wot! don't yer believe me?"

"I regret to confess I don't."

"Then yer needn't."

"Hey, Fritz!" shouted Jack, in the speaking tube.

"Yah," came the reply from the engine room.

"Is the machinery in proper working order?"

"Fer sure," replied the Dutelman. "You vos use der brobellers now?"

"In a few moments. We are up 20,000 feet," replied Jack, glancing at the aerostat, by which the electric currents were regulated.

"Coom down here vunct, and examine dose machinerles yourselluf."

"Very well. We can't be too particular," answered Jack. He glanced out the window.

The landscape below had melted by the distance into diminutive size.

To the east rolled the broad Atlantic, looking like a huge black sheet, the village of Wrightstown looked like a small patch no bigger than the palm of his hand, rivers and streams assumed a silvery, thread-like appearance, and great forests had taken on a black color.

Just then the airship plunged into the clouds.

She thus faded from the view of the people below, who had been intently watching her with spy-glasses.

A white hoar frost began to cover her.

This cloud was several hundred feet in thickness.

Jack told the old sailor not to start the wheels until the Eagle reached the solar current, and then went below.

The room into which the staircase led him was a beautifully furnished cabin with some bunks in it.

Percy Clifton stood looking at some books in a case on the wall, and paid no attention to Jack when he came down.

"Queer old fellow," muttered the young inventor, as he passed through a door leading into a combined mess-room and kitchen.

There was a room in back of it containing the electric plant, an electric machine for the searchlight and incandescent lamps, and air pump, and other necessary apparatus for working the screws.

The sternmost compartment was a storeroom for water, provisions, tools, chemicals, arms, ammunition, and other equipments, while the hold of the boat consisted of a vast air reservoir.

It was filled with atmosphere from the earth region by hydraulic pressure.

Fritz was in the engine room.

He was a corpulent young man with yellow hair, blue eyes, a smooth face and a red hot temper, while his obese body was attired in a native Dutch costume that gave him a most unique appearance.

"Shiminey Christmas, vot a funny drip," he chuckled. "If ve keeb on much funder ve go righd straighd ub by heaven, Sehack!"

He had been watching the monkey and the parrot.

They were combative creatures and had been engaged in a rough and tumble fight, but separated and fled at the young inventor's approach.

"The airship works beautifully," said Jack, with enthusiasm. "I was a little nervous about her at first, although it has been proven on scientific principles that a vacuum would float much more buoyantly than a hydrogen gas balloon."

"Und me neider," said Fritz.

"It has cost a great deal of time, care and money to construct this machine," said Jack, as he carefully examined the mechanism, "and had we failed, we would have won the ridicule of all the people who came to see the ascension."

"You nefer fail," said Fritz, who had implicit confidence in Jack's ability to carry out his ideas. "How high up ve gone to go?"

"Not much higher," replied the young inventor. "It is getting pretty cold now. I have a notion, though, that bal-

loons never find their equilibrium inside the atmospheric envelope of the earth."

"Vot! You tink dey would go up till dey got oud off der air vot surround de world?" asked Fritz, in surprise.

"Exactly. This has almost been proven with gas balloons. As long as there is room enough for the gas to expand in the bag and no ballast to hold it down, it keeps mounting. The reason the extreme height is never attained is because there never yet was enough room allowed for expansion, and the balloons burst and come down."

"You say dot Brofessor Bagley vos on poard?"

"He came just before we ascended, and is——"

Crash!

A violent blow on the head interrupted Jack.

It knocked him senseless.

Fritz uttered an ejaculation of alarm and glanced around.

Behind him stood Percy Clifton armed with a heavy metal rod.

The young Dutchman saw by the terrible expression delineated upon the man's face that he was a maniac.

Fritz was filled with horror.

He attempted to get out of Clifton's way.

Before he could do so the deadly rod swung around and caught him a blow upon the forehead that wrung a groan of pain from his lips and sent him staggering to the floor unconscious.

Had he caught the full force of that awful blow it would have crushed his skull.

A low, hoarse chuckle of satisfaction escaped the madman's lips, and he flung the bar down, glanced at his victims, and muttered softly:

"I've killed them. They are all enemies in Harcourt's employ to drag me to an asylum! They are in the conspiracy that defamed my poor boy and caused me to drive him out. They are mad—raving mad, every one of them!"

Like most lunatics, he thought he was sane and every one around him crazy.

He stood glaring at the two, his eyes glowing like live coals of fire, and his whole form quivering with suppressed excitement.

Then he softly stole back to the cabin, crept up the stairs, stripped off his coat and dropped it to the floor, as if to make ready for action.

Tim stood with his back turned to the madman.

So silent were Clifton's movements, the old sailor did not hear a sound as he stood peering out of the window.

Clifton quietly crept up behind him.

In a moment more he caught the old sailor by the neck, and giving vent to a horrible yell, he pulled him across the room.

A suppressed cry burst from the startled old fellow.

The door flew open with a bang, and Clifton pulled him out on deck.

"I'm going to hurl you overboard!" he said, frantically.

CHAPTER III.

ELEVEN MILES FROM THE EARTH.

A cry of horror pealed from Tim's lips and he grappled his antagonist.

He saw at once that Clifton was as mad as a March hare, and soon found that the banker was endowed with enormous strength.

"Help—help!" he shouted, well knowing that he could not cope with the maniac, and ignorant of the fate that had overtaken his friends.

"Silence!" roared the banker, as they fell to the deck, locked in a tight embrace. "No power on earth shall prevent me wiping Harcourt's gang out of existence. I'll kill you! I'll kill you!"

All power of reason had left his mind.

He had only one permanent idea now.

It was to murder every man whom he imagined had designs on him.

From this state of madness the unfortunate man was destined never to recover, for his unbalanced mind had been gradually bending toward the crisis of the malady.

He yelled, raved, and swore terribly.

In his struggles, he kicked, scratched, punched and bit Tim like a wild beast, all the time making a wild effort to drag him to the edge of the deck, and hurl him from the boat.

"Lord save me!" the old sailor groaned, as he gallantly struggled to resist him. "Thar ain't much hope for me! Help! Help! Oh, why don't somebody come to my aid?"

The furious struggle continued.

All this time the airship had been ascending.

She soon passed through the cloud and, although she kept going up, a current of air now caught her and drove her to the east.

Along she glided, all the time mounting upward, and she was carried over the ocean by the wind.

The cold kept intensifying, but Tim and his enemy did not feel it much, as they were so actively engaged struggling.

At the height of 22,930 feet the temperature was 26 degrees below zero.

When the Eagle had commenced her ascent, the air was 59 degrees, and the dew point 48; the difference can thus be understood.

Tim's blood fairly ran cold now, for he observed that Clifton had succeeded in dragging him close to the edge of the deck.

The old sailor fought with all his strength to tear himself free of the tenacious clutch Clifton had on him.

In this he succeeded.

He arose, and recoiling, drew a pistol.

The madman uttered a savage cry and bounded to his feet.

"Han's up, yer old lubber!" yelled the old sailor, grimly. "Han's up, or by thunder I'll let daylight through yer!"

Clifton's eyes bulged.

He had a vague notion that he was in danger.

A wild howl ripped from his lips and he rushed across the deck.

"Destruction!" he yelled. "You shall not catch me!"

"Haul to thar!" roared Tim. "D'yer want to commit suicide?"

The poor wretch did not heed him.

He rushed to the railing and sprang over.

Down shot his body through the air like a cannon ball. Down, down, down, through thousands of feet—through miles of space, a fearful shriek rising mournfully from below.

A groan pealed from Tim.

He stumped to the rail and glared over.

Far below, swiftly diminishing in size until it disappeared sunk the body of the doomed man.

Tim shuddered with horror.

"Great God!" he gasped.

The moment Clifton left the airship, the loss of his weight caused it to make an upward bound higher in the air.

Relieved of his violent exertion, the old sailor now began to feel the intense cold, and experience a strange sensation, for the Eagle had rapidly ascended to a height of thirty-seven thousand feet.

The old fellow's sight became dimmed.

Then suddenly he became absolutely blind.

A dull lethargy stole over him, and he staggered back from the railing in an irresistible desire to sleep.

"Holy smoke! I'm blind!" he cried, in horror. "Wot's ther matter wi' me? I can hardly keep my senses—my head's a-roarin' awful—my strength all seems ter be leavin' me."

He tottered and nearly fell.

But summoning all his resolution, he staggered toward the pilothouse, groped till he found the door, and pushed it open.

He gasped, and pitched headlong into the room.

The door closed with a spring behind him and, falling to the floor, a deadly coma crept over the old sailor.

At this juncture Jack recovered from the stunning effect of the blow he received, recalled to mind what had happened, and seeing Fritz reviving, he observed the rarefaction of the air.

"Great heavens! What height are we going to?" he gasped.

He knew that they would perish at a certain distance from the earth unless measures were taken to prevent the disaster.

Rushing up the spiral staircase, and seeing Tim lying in a stupor upon the floor, the young inventor quickly grasped a lever and gave it a pull.

It opened a valve leading into the air reservoir, and admitted the heavy atmosphere he was accustomed to breathing.

Instant relief was the result.

All the doors and windows were then closed.

Under the influence of the air, Tim began to revive.

Noticing this, Jack glanced out the window.

To his horror he observed that the balloon ship had gone so high that the refraction of the sun's rays was being lost, and with the diminution of light, the stars were appearing.

A dull, bluish-black gloom filled the air, which was fast merging into an intense darkness the higher they went.

In this gloomy dome the stars stood out like balls of vivid fire, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn looking twice their ordinary size.

Not a cloud was to be seen.

The cold outside was so intense that the frost had congealed into solid ice all over the airship, and a frightful chill penetrated the interior of the vessel.

The danger of freezing to death stared them in the face.

Their only hope for salvation laid in getting down out of that appalling height as quickly as possible, for one of the registers showed a height of 52,800 feet above the earth.

The ground was ten miles below the balloon ship.

Jack reached out his arm for the valve lever.

He could not use it—the muscles seemed paralyzed.

Then he tried to use his other arm. It was powerless, too.

He next shook himself, but he could only shake his body, for he felt as if his legs were numb—as if he had no legs.

It was owing to the non-circulation of the blood in his extremities.

He glanced up at the barometer, and his head fell over upon his right shoulder, his neck almost powerless.

Struggling fiercely to overcome the awful feeling, he succeeded in getting his head upright for an instant.

He dimly saw the scene outside, for an overpowering inclination to sleep had taken possession of him.

His glance fell upon a distant black object.

It was flying into the air from a great void beyond.

Jack's brain retained its activity, and he watched it keenly.

The object was drawing near the airship with terrible velocity and Jack gave a violent start when he realized what it was.

"A meteor!" he gasped.

The shock on his nerves sent his blood tingling through his veins like molten lead, and instantly revived his power.

The meteor was a rock of iron and other metals, fully fifty feet in diameter, and was falling into the atmosphere only a few miles away.

Down it shot with awful velocity.

It produced a low, humming sound at first, which gradually swelled into a mighty roar.

Suddenly, the speed of its descent caused such a friction that the big body became red hot, and then turned to a white heat.

At this point it burst with a roar far louder than the heaviest thunder ever heard on earth.

Thousands of incandescent fragments flew in all directions with a howl like a tornado, most of them striking downward in fiery red streaks not unlike comets.

Fortunately the Eagle was too far away from it to be injured, but the shock on the thin, rare air was awful.

All the ice covering the airship was cracked and sent earthward in a shower like hailstones.

Jack grasped the valve lever and pulled it.

The upward flight of the balloon ship was checked, for some of the atmosphere rushed into the vacuum.

Jack glanced at the gauge again.

It marked 58,080 feet, or eleven miles.

The Eagle was more than twice as high as Mount Deodhunga, 29,002 feet high, in the Himalaya range—the highest mountain in the world.

A strange phenomenon now happened to the Eagle.

She paused in her ascent, but did not immediately descend.

She had reached an altitude at which the gravitation of the earth was somewhat destroyed.

The reason of this did not occur to him at the moment, but he afterwards solved the strange problem.

This was the principle:

The axes of the magnetic pole and the gravitation of the earth cross each other at right angles.

The force of gravitation is from west to east; that of the magnetic pole from south to north.

The electric ship was magnetized like a compass needle, the north pole resisting the earth's gravitation upon her.

She was therefore held where she was by the two contending forces as rigidly as if she had nothing to do with the earth.

At the equator the earth revolves 1,400 feet per second, this speed diminishing toward the poles of the globe.

Its rate was about 1,002 feet per second where the balloon ship stood.

Consequently, while the Eagle hung there, the earth flew around her with a speed that made a blur of everything around the boat.

Jack pulled the valve open even wider, for a terrible heat was instantly imparted to the airship by the speed of the wind she was resisting.

It was fortunate that he did so, else the boat would have been thrown up miles in the air, far beyond the center of gravitation, and lost.

More air flew into the cylinder.

There came a sudden sinking, and then, as the atmospheric gravitation tore her from the grip of the magnetic pole, a terrible shock ensued.

The entire machine was whirled around and around, gyrating and tumbling in every known direction for the space of a minute.

Suddenly she gained her equilibrium.

Jack and his companions had gripped the first stationary object with which their hands came in contact.

Had they not done so, their doom would have been sealed. When the Eagle floated again she was intact, but in that

Brief interval the earth had gone under her a tremendous distance and she was hovering above the land again.

But she was descending fast.

Her speed of descent was a thousand feet per minute.

It sent a sickening sensation through her occupants.

"Is she broke?" gasped Tim, in terror.

"No. She will pause when she finds her equilibrium in the air," responded Jack, in strangling tones.

They felt as if they had jumped from a high house.

Every moment it seemed as if the deck was dropping from beneath their feet, so rapid was the descent.

As the boat was heaviest, it retained its position, and kept dragging the cylinder after it.

"If she goes all the way to the earth this way, the friction of her descent through the air will heat her so that we will roast in here," thought Jack.

Fritz had recovered and come up from below.

He laid flat on the floor near Tim.

They were all deathly sick, and their nerves were drawn to a high tension of suspense over their probable fate.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAN IN THE AIR.

"The speed of our descent is diminishing."

Jack uttered this shout a few minutes afterward.

Below them he could see the clouds, through the rifts in which the earth presently appeared, bathed in the light of the moon.

The balloon ship acted in the air much like a submarine ship acts in the water, for as soon as her equilibrium was reached, her descent was stopped, and she floated.

She was then 10,019 feet in altitude.

By this time the three navigators had recovered from the terrible effect of their experience in the heavens, and although Jack and Fritz suffered somewhat from the effect of the blows Percy Clifton had dealt them, they were so glad to escape death that they did not think of it.

"Safe!" gasped the sailor, delightedly. "But, oh, wot an experience!"

"Dot son-ohf-a-sea-gooks vas as crazy as a looneydicks!" said Fritz.

"What has become of him?" asked Jack.

"Ther lubber tried to murder me, an' then jumped overboard!" explained Tim. "Here's his coat; he must atooken it off afore he came up arter me."

He pointed to the garment which Percy Clifton had stripped off and flung to the floor, and Jack picked it up.

"Unfortunate wretch. Probably his brain was turned by finding himself elevated to the awful height to which we ascended."

"Then he oughtenter come up wi' us," said Tim, reflectively, taking a bite of plug tobacco and giving a hitch at his baggy pants.

"Id vos a goot ting dot he yoomp oferboard alretty," growled Fritz, "'cause if he didn't vas done so, I would a done id for him."

"What?" laughed Jack. "You would have jumped overboard for him?"

"Nein! I don't vos mean dot. I mean dot I would yuck him oferboard mitond some bitys."

"Lordy, yer wouldn't a-had ter heave anything with him," grinned Tim.

"Who say dot I would doon dot?"

"You said you'd a-heaved him overboard without pity."

"Ach! Don't make yourselluf some foolishness alretty, Fritz."

They all laughed and were restored to good humor again, whereupon Tim and Fritz went off to see what condition the Eagle was in.

While they were so engaged Jack noticed that there was a long envelope in the breast pocket of the coat he had picked up.

Thinking he might find some information about Prof. Bagley in the paper, the young inventor drew it out.

Upon the envelope was written the name "Percy Clifton," and upon withdrawing the papers it contained Jack saw that one of the documents was a will of this Percy Clifton, in which he bequeathed all his business interest in the banking firm, considerable property, money, stocks and bonds to his only son and heir, Charles Clifton.

Besides this paper were two letters.

One of them was from Charles Clifton, addressed to his father.

"I am innocent of issuing the forged check which Roger Harcourt declared I had made in your name," said the letter. "That man was my deadly enemy because his ward, Fanny Fairfax, and I were in love with each other." "Harcourt, I am convinced, charged me with the crime to get me out of his way. He wanted to marry the heiress himself for her money.

"She loathes him, however, and will never link her life with his. You was unjust to believe that viper and refuse to listen to me when I told you I was innocent. You was prejudiced against me because I was led off into bad company, and led a dissolute life contrary to your command. But you will regret your cruel injustice. I will never trouble you again. I have got to earn my living. Having no other resource, I have joined a circus, and daily perform a hazardous feat that has won me great distinction, and jeopardizes my life. But I do not care how soon I die. Disgraced unjustly to the father I loved and the girl I worshipped, life has no further charms for me."

It was a pitiful letter, and it set Jack to thinking.

"How in the world did Prof. Bagley ever get possession of this will and letter?"

The other letter contained a portrait of Percy Clifton, much to Jack's astonishment, and after glancing at it, he read the letter.

Its contents astonished him immensely.

The following is what it said:

My dear son:—

Your letter reached me and has found me a heart-broken, repentant man. I believe you. Return, and forgive me. I shall call Roger Harcourt to account for this when you come back. Enclosed is my picture. You can see how my rash act has aged my features. Do not refuse to return. Since driving you out, my mind has become affected. I fear that I shall become crazy. I had my will made out, leaving everything to you, five years ago. It remains intact. I shall put it in the safe deposit vaults for safekeeping. Remember my mental condition, I warn you. Before I see you again, I fear I may be a raving maniac.

"Your father,

"Percy Clifton."

"By thunder! we have been deceived!" cried Jack.

"Wot's that?" queried Tim, as he entered with Fritz just then.

"That man wasn't Prof. Bagley."

"Who he vos, den?" asked Fritz, in amazement

"Why, a man named Percy Clifton."

"How d'yer know?" asked Tim, curiously

"By these papers I found in the pocket of his coat."

And Jack thereupon explained everything to his friends

They were just as much astonished as he was.

It was clear enough to them that the lunatic had cunningly palmed himself off to them as Prof. Bagley to carry out the mad whim that had entered his head to go up into the balloon ship with them.

"How did you find the Eagle?" asked Jack.

"Thar ain't a thing broken on her," replied Tim.

"Good! Then let us start the machinery."

Jack saw that she was maintaining the position she had paused at, and he pulled one of the levers.

It coupled a small, light, oil engine to the generators, and as soon as they begun to operate, the current worked a huge motor connected to the wheel shaft.

There was a small motor up in the cylinder to work the screw at the end of the cone, and as soon as the current was passing these propellers began to whirl.

Airships can only be steered against the wind by the bow, and for this reason the rudder of the Eagle was so placed.

The vacuum cylinder raised or lowered the airship to any desired height, and the aerial currents manifestly wafted her along in their course the same as balloons are operated.

But the great point Jack obtained by his inventions was the combination of lightness and extraordinary strength of the machine in conjunction with an immense driving power.

So great was the strength of the huge, wide-bladed fan-wheels that the ship could head against a strong gale or tack across it with as much faculty as any vessel plowing the sea.

She had been carried far inland, as we have stated, and the gloom of night settled over the scene.

Jack therefore turned on the searchlight and the incandescent lamps in the rooms, when a mellow halo of rich light shot out.

A mass of clouds was overtaken as the Eagle gracefully glided through the air, and as Jack glanced out at them, he observed that the upper surface under the airship presented a striking appearance.

Great billows and pyramids, cones and ragged projections broke its smoky looking surface in a thousand fantastic forms.

The young inventor laid his course for the ocean.

He designed to cross the Atlantic to Europe first, but was in no hurry, and therefore drove the boat slowly.

Fritz prepared an excellent supper, which was duly eaten.

The watch had been divided in three, and each one took his trick at the wheel for the space of four hours.

Tim and Fritz turned in.

The night passed away, and after an early breakfast in the morning Jack found that they had left land out of sight astern.

Only the heaving Atlantic rolled under them.

During the night our friends had ample time and opportunity of testing all the capabilities of the balloon ship, for they had met various stratas of air.

Some carried gales of wind, others generated flashes of lightning and heavy thunder, one carried rain, and another so enveloped them in its dense folds that they could not see where they were going.

After mess Fritz assumed control of the wheel, and Jack and Tim went out on deck with a glass to view the sea.

The Eagle had been dropped to within 5,000 feet of the ocean, and as they glanced down they observed a large transatlantic steamship heading westward, all her passengers and crew on the upper deck.

They were looking up at the wonderful airship in blank astonishment as it passed over them, and wondered what it was, until the old sailor brought a starry flag out and waved it to them.

Then they responded, and the signal gun of the ship was discharged in salute, and as a gun shot can be easily heard at a height of 10,070 feet in the air, our friends had no trouble to distinguish the sound.

In a few minutes the ocean traveler was left far astern.

"Have you found out how high we went last night, Jack?" asked the old sailor, when the ship faded from view.

"Yes. Eleven miles. You know that we gauge the height by the fall of the barometer. No living man has ever been so far up as we were before."

"Couldn't live thar long, could we."

"No. And yet the people of Quito live comfortably at a height of 9,560 feet above the level of the sea, and the shepherds of the hamlet of Antisana, the highest inhabited spot in the world, breathe at an elevation of 13,500 feet, air that is only 3-5 the usual density and live."

"Queer," commented Tim.

"The temperature where we were was 148 degrees below zero. There's a curious fact in connection with our situation at that great elevation. On the surface of the earth an ordinary sized man sustains an atmospheric pressure of about 25,000 pounds, while up where we were we would only have to sustain about 2,786 pounds. The higher up you go the more diminished the weight is. There is a point midway between the earth and the moon where no gravitation from the sun, earth or stars exists, all weight is lost, and the heaviest metals will float, as if lighter than the lightest air."

As Jack made this established scientific assertion, he suddenly caught sight of a distant object in the sky.

Tim gave a whistle of astonishment, and was just going to ask him how he knew what he said was true, when he saw Jack staring off to the northward with a look of intense surprise.

"Wot are ye watchin', my lad?" he asked.

"See there—what is that tiny black speck?"

"Hang me, if I kin make it out, unless it's a bird."

Jack raised the glass he held, and intently studied it.

In a moment more an ejaculation of astonishment pealed from his lips, and he shouted:

"By jingo, it's a balloon."

"A balloon?" echoed Tim.

"Yes, sir, and it has a man clinging to it for his life."

"Lemme see!" gasped Tim, taking the glass.

He leveled it at the black speck and saw that it was a balloon with a small board hanging down from the netting by one end.

This board had evidently been a swing seat for the aeronaut to sit on, but the line at one end had broken.

The ballonist, clad in a suit of pink tights, was hanging by his hands to the broken board, unable to help himself, and the silken bag was rapidly going up in the air.

A strong current had evidently caught it, and was swiftly blowing the pea-shaped globe out across the ocean.

The peril of the unfortunate aeronaut was manifest.

When he became exhausted from clinging to the board, he was bound to relax his hold, and plunge down to his doom!

Into the pilothouse rushed Jack.

"Stay where you are to lend him a hand, Tim!" he shouted.

"Ay, my lad!" responded the old sailor.

Relieving Fritz of the wheel, Jack pulled the lever all the way over on the arostat.

Every volt of electro motive force was put into the motors and with buzzing wheels the Eagle shot ahead through the sky at a tremendous velocity, and plunged toward the imperiled aeronaut.

CHAPTER V.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

The current of air that had hold of the balloon was traveling at the rate of a mile a minute.

At the same time the ascensive power of the gas was rapidly carrying the silken bag aloft at a speed of 800 feet a minute.

The aeronaut was then about five miles north of the airship, and about 2,500 feet higher.

Jack had the screws working as fast as the dynamos could drive their motors, and at the same time he started the pump, emptying the air out of the cylinder.

Therefore, while plunging ahead at a rapid rate of speed, the Eagle was, at the same time, mounting high in the sky.

Jack kept his glance fastened upon the registers.

He saw that he was rapidly gaining upon the balloon.

When the airship arrived within a mile of it, he saw a white, smoky cloud pouring up from the silken globe.

It was the gas escaping.

The bag was distended to its utmost capacity then, as it had attained its utmost height, and now threatened to burst in consequence of the expansive gas having no more room to distend.

The Eagle went like a rocket.

"Hello, there!" screamed Jack, presently.

The aeronaut turned his head and saw the airship.

"Save me!" he shouted. "I can't hang on much longer."

In that silent region sound travels a great distance.

Their voices were plainly audible to each other, although nearly half a mile separated them.

The last words had scarcely escaped the balloonist, when there sounded a loud snapping and crackling around the globe as some of the net cords broke.

In another moment a report was heard. The side of the balloon was rent near the concentrating hoop, and the atmosphere became filled with a whitish filmy vapor.

This was the consequence of a mixture of the warm hydrogen with the cold atmosphere.

There came a violent rustling of the silk.

A second and third explosion followed in quick succession, and then all at once the balloon burst into a mass of flame from the effect of the spontaneous combustion!

A cry of alarm escaped the desperate aeronaut when he saw the globe that held him aloft on fire.

It was a terrible spectacle to witness that flaming globe rushing through the sky, collapsed at the side the wind came from, and the man being dragged along with it.

Straight toward it soared the airship.

"Quick, for God's sake!" screamed the balloonist.

"We'll have you in a moment," replied Jack.

The Eagle rapidly overhauled the burning balloon.

In a moment more it was ten feet below.

"Drop down!" roared Tim.

The aeronaut obeyed.

He landed on the deck.

Relieved of its weight, the balloon shot up.

It disappeared in a cloud a moment later.

Tim reached the aeronaut and helped him to rise.

He was a manly looking fellow with superb figure, curly hair, blue eyes, round features, and a light mustache.

For a moment he was unable to speak, so overwhelmed with emotion was he over his strange escape from death.

He stood trembling and gasping for breath a few moments when Fritz took the wheel Jack came out on deck.

"We caught you after all!" cheerily cried the young inventor.

"By heavens, I never expected such good luck!" the balloonist replied.

"How do you feel now?"

"Pretty shaky. I am grateful for this."

"Take a pull at this whiskey flask."

Jack handed it to him, and he eagerly took a draught.

It stimulated him wonderfully, for there had been an awful strain brought to bear upon his nerves and the reaction unstrung him.

As soon as the young man had somewhat recovered, he glanced around at the airship curiously, and asked:

"May I ask who you are, sir?"

"My name is Jack Wright."

"What? The great inventor? I have heard of you."

"My devices have given me considerable publicity."

"So you have put the atmosphere in harness, eh?"

"This balloon ship shows it."

"Decidedly. It is a wonderful invention. Do you use gas?"

"No. It works on the vacuum principle."

"Oh, I see. The metal is aluminum, isn't it?"

"Yes, and the motive force electricity."

"You have combined the two lightest principles—the only two by which such a contrivance as this could be made possible."

"I had one fact before me which most people forget when they attempt the invention of aerostats," replied Jack. "No body can float in air unless it is 800 times lighter than water. Such a body must carry 800 times less power than a steam-boat uses. By the use of a vacuum in the lightest and strongest known metal, the machine has been made as proportionately light in the atmosphere as a ship is at sea. The proper adjustment of electrical machinery of the lightest kind has given me the power to make headway against a wind blowing fifty miles an hour. No water ship could tack against such a gale."

"Astonishing!" ejaculated the other. "I am curious to see the interior of this marvelous invention."

"Follow me inside, then, and I will show her to you. At the same time, as it is very chilly here, I'll give you a suit of clothes, for you must feel cold in that costume," said Jack, leading the stranger into the pilothouse.

Tim and Fritz were introduced to him, but odd as it appeared, the man did not venture to mention his name.

Having attired him properly, Jack asked him:

"How came you to be clinging to that flyaway balloon?"

"It was the result of a combination of circumstances, sir."

"You seem to be very reticent about it."

"Pardon me," said the balloonist, flushing guiltily. "I'll explain. I am a professional aeronaut and travel with a show. My business is to go up to a height of about 3,000 feet with a captive balloon every day, spring off, and descend with a parachute. To-day we were in Boston. I made the ascension, watched by a multitude. The rope holding the balloon to the earth was attached to a narrow board, on which I sat. At the height of 2,000 feet one end of the board broke from the guy cords. I fell. The rope and parachute dropped to the ground. Flinging out my hands, I caught hold of the board. There I hung for my life. There came a roar of alarm from the crowd below. Up in the air shot the balloon, with me clinging to the board. Away I was carried over the sea. I had just about given up all hope of life when you appeared."

"You had a thrilling experience."

"Very. I do not care to undergo it again."

"How are you feeling now?"

"My arms are strained, but otherwise I feel all right."

"We are making a trip around the world. It is possible for me to put you aboard of a homeward bound steamer, if

you wish to return to America, or we can carry you to the other side of the ocean."

"I wish I could accompany you on your aerial voyage."

"So you can, if you like."

"Thank you. I would be delighted to do so."

"I would, however, like to know something more about you."

The aeronaut looked abashed.

His face colored again, and he said in agitated tones:

"Is it necessary for me to give you my history?"

"Why, is there any reason why you shouldn't?"

"Yes. I have a deep reason for wishing to keep it a secret."

Jack looked amazed.

Then a feeling of resentment took possession of him.

"I don't like that!" he exclaimed.

"But I am an honest man!", pleaded the aeronaut. "It is only for a private reason that I am prompted to keep silent."

"That explanation does not suit me," said Jack, decisively. "I do not like this secrecy. It looks suspicious. When we first began this trip yesterday from Wrightstown we took an individual aboard in mistake for another man. He turned out to be a lunatic. After trying to murder us all, he finally sent us up eleven miles in the air and then sprang overboard."

"Good heavens! is that so?"

"You may have my word for it."

"Then I can't blame you for being particular."

"Recollect the peculiar circumstances under which we found you."

"True. But who was this lunatic? Did you discover?"

"Yes. He left his coat behind him. In the pocket was an envelope that contained his will. It showed him to be a very rich man. There were also two letters with the will. One was a letter from his son, and the other a letter to his son."

"And his name?"

"Percy Clifton."

"My God! It is my father!"

A deathly pallor overspread the balloonist's face.

His eyes bulged out, he clapped his hand to his forehead, reeled back and glaring at Jack wildly, he panted hard and became intensely agitated.

"Your father?" cried Jack, in amazement.

"Yes, my name is Charles Clifton," was the hoarse reply.

"That was the name mentioned in the letters."

For a moment an intense silence ensued.

The balloonist had a look of great mystery upon his pallid face.

He finally mastered his emotion, gulped down a lump that seemed to rise in his throat, and asked in low, strained tones:

"Is it true, Mr. Wright, that my father became crazy and killed himself?"

"Let me give you an account of what has transpired," said Jack, "and then you will comprehend everything."

The balloonist nodded, and Jack began.

In a few moments the young man knew the whole story, and at its conclusion, he said to Jack:

"In order to prove my identity, let me tell you what the letter said which I wrote to my father."

"Go ahead," replied Jack, nodding.

He gave the young inventor an accurate account of the contents of the letter.

That satisfied Jack of his identity.

He therefore unhesitatingly handed him the will and the two letters, and Charley Clifton perused them.

"Did you see what they said?" he asked in conclusion.

"I read them," replied Jack.

"With this will I can claim my poor father's fortune. His letter will show the young lady I love that I was made a victim of Roger Harcourt, when I return from this trip."

"Now, that you would find it to your interest to hasten back to New York, don't you want to leave us?"

"Not until this journey is finished," replied Clifton. "This is, of course, if you are satisfied to take me with you."

"Certainly, you can come if you like. I am satisfied now that you are really Charles Clifton. Ballooning has a fascination for you."

"The most intense," replied the young man. "It is not nearly as dangerous as most people imagine. I have had so much experience with it since I left home that I have a passion for the art, and such a trip as this will gratify me tremendously."

That settled the matter.

Charley Clifton was installed at once as one of the Eagle's crew.

Tim and Fritz were told about the strange combination of events that dove-tailed the occurrences of the past thirty-six hours and talked about the event all day.

The Eagle kept on her course to the eastward, and the following night fell upon the sea.

The watch was divided, and Tim and Fritz were left on duty, the airship going along at an altitude of 1,000 feet above the sea.

A few hours before daylight the Dutchman went out on deck.

Scarcely had he done so when he gave utterance to a wild yell of alarm that startled the old sailor and caused him to peer out.

CHAPTER VI.

HELP FROM HEAVEN.

Tim did not see anything ahead of the boat to excite his apprehension, nor could he look back without going through the door, as there were no portholes in the after part of the turret.

He was convinced that whatever it was that startled Fritz must have been astern of the airship.

"Wot's ther matter out thar?" he yelled.

"Send her ub—send her ub!" roared Fritz, wildly.

Tim did not hesitate a moment.

He pulled the airpump lever and started the machine emptying the cylinder, whereupon the Eagle began to rapidly shoot upward.

Then he glanced out the door.

A cry of dismay escaped him at the scene that met his view.

Astern of the ship a peculiar looking cloud was coming along.

It was of enormous dimensions, as black as ink, floated on a line flush with that pursued by the Eagle, and vivid streaks of the most blinding lightning were darting out of it on all sides.

The cloud was rotating like a gigantic top as it rushed along.

It was broad and flattened at the apex, and ran down toward the sea in the shape of a funnel, its spirating point agitating the water beneath into a state of ebullition.

Presently the sea shot up and joined the point of the ominous cloud in a rotating column which rushed along.

It was the formation of a waterspout.

Bounding upward, the threatening cloud pulled the water up with it, in a great, gyrating column.

In back of it there came another mass of gloomy clouds from down the horizon, obscuring the moon and stars.

Torrents of rain were falling into the sea from them, and the air vibrated with the reports of thunder.

The dreadful cloud was the harbinger of a terrific storm at sea, and was moving along in the same direction as the Eagle.

Ahead of the airship Tim beheld the tiny, twinkling lights on a ship that rode directly in the path of the storm.

He heard nothing when the Eagle stood at an angle with the ship, but the moment she hovered squarely over the vessel, he could distinctly hear every man's voice aboard of her.

"Run before the wind!" he heard the captain yell.

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the reply.

"I'll run the ship with the first officer. Two men at the wheel there, let the master keep time, steer courses, and have the ship's place worked up!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Reeve lines fore and aft. Furl all sails, and secure them with studding sail tacks as well as gaskets! Batten down the hatches, and put relieving tackles on that tiller! Hurry up, will you! Look alive, boys! Down top gallant yards!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Hey! send top gallant masts on deck, and take in the flying jib boom. Clear the tops, my lads, with gaffs down. Get those rudder-chocks and a spare tiller ready. Clear scuppers and pumps. Now, then, square the yards, throw headyards forward, and set that forestay sail with double sheets."

"The waterspout is almost upon us, sir."

"Blast it! we have no means of breaking it, either!"

The Eagle passed on and Tim heard no more.

He had seen enough, however.

The airship was steadily mounting upward, when there suddenly sounded a loud roar, and Tim and Fritz rushed inside.

It was lucky they did.

For in an instant the fearful cloud reached them.

It was over 12,000 feet thick, and heavily charged with electricity, for a thousand glistening, snapping and crackling sparks of fire shot from it into the hull of the balloon ship.

She was covered all over with these fiery bubbles, and as soon as the cloud fairly had her in its clutch, she was hurled high up in the air, and then beaten down again.

The cloud covered an area of four miles in diameter, was of a circular form, its center presenting a great concavity toward the sea, and its edges very ragged and falling downward with an agitated motion.

A suffocating sensation assailed Tim and Fritz upon first entering it, but this feeling passed away when they got inside the ship.

Despite the electric globules that covered the Eagle, an intense cold filled her, she began to gyrate rapidly and a dismal moaning sound of the wind rose into a bellowing roar.

The old sailor was in hopes that they would be hurled up out of the cloud, but was disappointed by the violent downward plunge.

It only subsided when the Eagle was hurled up again to its maximum, only to sink down with a swinging and fearful speed.

A nauseating feeling overwhelmed them.

Jack and Clifton awoke and rushed upstairs, for the yells of the parrot and monkey were added to the din of the storm-cloud.

As soon as Jack saw the balloon ship bounding up and

plunging down in the grasp of the cloud, he grasped the wheel.

"I'll manage her!" he exclaimed.

"Wot kin be did?" groaned Tim.

"Drop by our weight!"

As Jack said this, he pulled the valve lever.

It let some of the atmosphere come into the cylinder.

She began to gravitate toward the sea very rapidly.

Just as she plunged from the center of the whirling vortex a large, filmy cloud came rushing toward the one they were in.

It was charged with electricity of a negative character.

Great tongues of positive electricity shot from the cloud the Eagle was in and, meeting that which flew from the other cloud, an awful streak of forked lightning flashed over the airship, which was instantly followed by a deafening thunder-clap.

The shock on the atmosphere was horrible.

A rolling and rumbling echo ran over the clouds.

Had the Eagle remained where she had been before Jack took the wheel, that flash would have struck her.

There was every probability that she would have been shattered into a thousand fragments and hurled down into the sea with the remains of her crew.

Down she sunk and finally dashed from the cloud underneath, where Jack checked her descent.

The thundergust swept on and left the Eagle behind it, and Jack observed the column of the waterspout going to pieces.

It had been broken by the movements of the airship in the cloud that sucked it up, and now went thundering down into the sea.

At a distance of 50 feet from the ocean the Eagle paused.

Coming on in back of her was a fierce rainstorm.

The darkness intensified.

"By heavens, I'm glad to get out of that cloud!" Jack exclaimed.

"I tort id would a tored der Eagles to bieces!" said Fritz.

"Kin she navigate here in safety?" Tim asked, in anxious tones.

"We won't get anything but a drenching," replied the young inventor, "and as the water we will ship won't ballast her down any to speak of we need have no apprehensions on that score."

He turned on the searchlight as he gave them this assurance and slanted it down upon the sea.

A strange scene met his view.

The large and handsome ship which Tim had seen, now floated upon the ocean completely dismantled.

She was tossing at the mercy of the wind and waves, some of her crew were lost, and those who remained expected nothing but death from the troubled sea.

The waterspout had struck her a devastating blow, and the coming storm now threatened to finish the work of wrecking her.

A wild shout of terror pealed from the superstitious sailors when they saw the blinding glare of light shoot down from the dark sky upon them.

They thought that it was something supernatural—a forewarning of their approaching death—an opening of the heavens to announce the crack of doom—the descent of the sun, and a dozen other notions.

"Poor fellows!" cried Jack, in pity. "Unless we do something they are lost."

"How kin we help 'em?" eagerly asked Tim.

"Their ship may be saved if we can take it in tow until we encounter some vessel that will rescue them."

"Shall I drop them a grapnel at the end of a rope?"

"By all means. We can't desert them here. If it comes to the worst, we could descend to the sea, and take them aboard ourselves."

Out on deck went Tim and Fritz, anxious to help the poor sailors, and at the stern they uncoiled a long rope.

One end of it was fastened to the airship, and at the other end of it there was a steel grapneling iron.

This they lowered down toward the sea.

"Ship ahoy!" yelled Tim, leaning over the taffrail.

No answer was returned to him, but he heard by the excited cries of the men that they had caught what he said, and were more terrified than ever.

"Ahoy, thar!" roared the old sailor again. "Make fast thar this ere line, an' we'll save you an' ther ship. Don't be skeered, lads! Don't be skeered! This is only a balloon ship."

There was another interval of silence.

Then the trembling voice of the captain shouted:

"In God's name, are you mortal men?"

"Ay, ay, an' ready to lend er helpin' hand ter a feller critter in distress."

"But that blinding glare——"

"It's a searchlight, you big fool!"

"Oh, thank heaven! Now I understand!"

Down dropped the grapnel to the deck.

Here it was eagerly seized by the amazed sailors and made fast to the bow of the dismantled vessel.

"All ready?" yelled Tim.

"Ay, all ready!" was the reply.

"Then we'll tow you along till we meet a craft as will help yer."

"God bless you, sir!" came the reply.

Just then the coming storm burst upon the ship and struck the Eagle with awful force, propelling her forward.

A terrible strain was brought to bear upon the drag rope, and as the airship was driven along she pulled the wreck after her.

CHAPTER VII.

BROUGHT DOWN BY A SHOT.

All night long the balloon ship towed the half wrecked vessel through the sea, the waves dashing the dismantled craft about like a cork, breaching over her in mighty breakers, and striving to tear her away.

It rained in torrents for hours, and the wind blew from the southwest in a regular gale that kept the ship plunging madly.

As the Eagle's course was with the storm, she rode ahead with scarcely any oscillation, particularly on account of being anchored to the wreck.

The densest gloom filled the air, and the thrashing and tumbling of the sea rose to the ears of Jack and his companions with a continued rumble like a roar that rises from the falls of Niagara.

A patent log of Jack's invention hung on the wall.

It was a peculiar instrument designed to correctly register every mile the balloon ship made from the moment she left the shop in the air.

When morning finally dawned, a heavy fog overhung the ocean beneath the Eagle, so that nothing was seen of the ship she had in tow, although the air was as clear as crystal where she floated.

Charley Clifton was at the wheel, and Tim went out on deck, made his way aft, and saw that the towing hawser was as taut as an iron bar.

"We ain't lost ther ship yet!" muttered the old sailor. "She's hangin' on like thunder. Ther storm's gone, but blast my squintin'-tackle if I kin see any sign o' her."

Assured that the ship had safely weathered the gale, Tim went back to the pilothouse and said to the aeronaut:

"She's atow yet, as snug as if berthed at a dock."

"What a benefactor this airship is," said Charley. "Not only has it been the means of saving my life, but that of the ship's crew as well."

"Lordy, sir," said Tim, in modest tones, "this ain't nuthin'! Why, yer oughter seen wot I once did wi' ther ole frigate Wabash when I wuz in ther navy. That wuz somethin' ter talk about."

"To what do you refer?"

"Why, yer see it was at ther time ther 96th regiment wuz hemmed in on ther seashore by ther rebels. Thar they wuz, forty thousand soldiers surrounded by ten times as many o' ther enemy, an' no way ter escape, 'cept by jumpin' inter ther sea astern o' them. Wot they wuz ter do wi' not enough weapings to defend tharselves, nobuddy knew. Jist then I was a-steerin' ther frigate down ther coast, an' seen wot a desprit state they wuz in. I headed fer ther shore. Afore I could reach it, four o' ther enemy's gunboats came down a river an' opened fire on us."

"Heavens, what a situation!"

"I reckon it wuz. Waal, sir, we didn't weaken. We jist rammed big charges o' dynamite in our guns, an' let 'em have it. In less'n no time thar wuzn't a plank o' them ships lef'. Then we run ashore. Ther enemy wuz closin' in thar lines on them ere Yankee troops in ther darkness, for night had fell. Ashore we went in our boats, and in two winks o' a dead lamb's tail we carried every one o' them soldiers aboard o' our ship. Then——"

"Say, Tim——" interposed Charley.

"Then, as I wuz a-sayin'" continued Tim, "we scattered a lot o' dynamite all over ther ground, an' when thar enemy made a rush fer ther men we saved, they trod on the explosive there come a report, a great big glare o' fire, an' when ther smoke cleared away, not one o' them lads remained. Instid, a hole was knocked through ther sky, an' ther place whar it happened wuz scooped out, an' now forms what is known as Mattamuskee lake."

"Great Caesar! don't you know that dynamite was not in use as ammunition until long after the war was over?"

"It wasn't?" growled Tim, in surprise.

"No, sir! Then how could you have used it?"

"I dunno, but we did."

"Then how in the world could you have taken forty thousand soldiers aboard of one frigate? Why, their weight would have sunk her, for allowing 125 pounds to a man, that number would weigh five million pounds, to say nothing of the room they would occupy."

"Fee-foo!" whistled Tim, more and more amazed.

He had not thought of these little points.

A smile stole over Charley's face, and he exclaimed:

"I am afraid your imagination has got the best of your common sense, old fellow! The yarn don't go down."

"Jerusalem! I ain't axin' yer ter believe me," replied Tim.

"It's lucky you don't expect me to, or you'd get left."

Just then Jack and Fritz came up.

"Go down and got your breakfasts," said the Dutchman. Tim and Charley were hungry, and complied.

"I see the fog is breaking, Fritz," cried the young inventor after awhile, as he went out on deck and looked down.

"Did yer vos seen dot shib?"

"Yes; she seems to be all right. Ah—ther's another craft!"

A large ship, under full sail, was heading for the one the Eagle towed, and Jack presently heard her commander yell:

"Ship ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" replied the captain of the wreck.

"Do you want any assistance?"

"Yes. Will you tow us to port?"

"We will, if we can claim salvage."

"Then throw us a hawser."

While this was being done, the captain shouted to Jack:

"We've got help now."

"Cast off the grapnel!" answered the young inventor.

"Ay, ay, and we will never forget your kindness."

The grapnel was loosened and Jack hauled the drag-rope up.

The balloon ship darted up in the sky, as soon as she was cast loose from the wreck, and shot through the clouds.

When she reached her equilibrium, she opened up in the midst of the vaporous mass a brilliant space, from which Jack could see the blue of heaven.

The polariscope, directed toward this region, showed an internal polarization, but when it was pointed toward the side where the mist still prevailed, there was none.

The blueness of the sky was taken with the cyanometer.

As Jack glanced off toward the upper mists, he saw the sun looking quite white, as if shorn of its strength.

Below the horizontal plane, or horizon of the balloon ship, he saw a second sun reflected upon the horizontal faces of the ice crystals floating in the high cloud.

The Eagle paused at a height of 3,000 feet, and reaching the solar current, continued her flight to the eastward.

All traces of the ship she saved were lost.

The æthriscope measured a decided change in the temperature of the sky, and the anemometer gave the velocity of the wind as sixty miles per hour.

As the shadows of twilight fell Jack discerned land ahead.

Within an hour, they reached it, and dropping down to within five hundred feet of the earth, the young inventor saw that they had reached the Kerry coast of Ireland.

Dingle Bay lay to the north and directly below was the bold, striking shores of Valencia Island, the town of Knightstown, on which is the terminus of the Anglo-American submarine cable.

The airship flew diagonally across the land in the direction of the Giants Causeway—a platform of rocks extending between the rugged mountains and groups of pillars from a cliff down into the sea.

Below, the scene was made up of rolling green swards, and swelling lowlands, dotted with fields of flax and grain, cities, towns, villages, and hamlets.

"We've crossed the ocean, Fritz!" shouted the young inventor.

"Yah!" came the reply from the pilothouse. "I see me dot."

Jack peered over the railing.

A babel of voices had reached his ears, coming up from below, and he saw that they were passing over Portmagee.

There were only 189 people in the place, but at a glance downward, Jack saw that nearly one half of the population had seen the airship and went rushing after it.

A moment afterward he saw a man with a gun take aim at the queer looking machine and fire.

The sharp crack of the rifle pealed out loudly.

In a moment more there sounded an echoing, metallic bang overhead, as the bullet hit the cylinder.

So thin were the plates that the ball easily penetrated.

A loud, whistling shriek arose as the air was sucked into the cylinder through the hole, and the Eagle began to fall.

"Confound the fool who fired that shot!" cried Jack, angrily, "he has punched a hole in the cylinder now, and we are falling."

"Donner und Blitzen!" roared Fritz. "For vot he done dot?"

"Heaven only knows! Pure maliciousness, I think."

Down sunk the airship gradually as the atmosphere poured into her through the opening, and in a few moments, with all her sustaining power gone, she neared the ground.

Fritz stopped the screw.

Then she struck upon her flanges in a clear, grassy sward.

All her electric lights were blazing, and the crowd rushed up to her, yelling and talking, and Jack alighted.

"Fritz!" he shouted. "Find the aperture, and patch it."

By the time Jack reached the ground, the crowd came up to him, headed by the man who carried the gun.

This individual happened to be a coast-guard.

"Why did you fire at that balloon ship, you big lunkhead?" Jack demanded, in angry tones. "You might have killed us."

"Arrah, be aisy," replied the coast-guard, harshly. "It's luck yez are that I'm not after breakin' yer head as well!"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Shure, it's be balloons that shmugglin' has been thried afore on this coasht. But bedad its meself has had the experience wid 'em. An' now, me laddy-buck, I'll be throublin' yez ter hold yer tongue, git out av me way, an' give me a chance ter board that quare balloon to examine her!"

"You shall not put one foot on her!" declared Jack.

"Out av me way, or I'll break yer head!"

He rudely pushed Jack aside, still further arousing the anger of the young inventor, when Jack dealt him a punch that knocked him down.

A ferocious yell escaped the coast-guard.

He scrambled to his feet, and seizing his rifle by the barrel, he swung it around his head and made a rush for Jack.

"Be heavens, I'll bate ther head av ye!" he screamed, furiously, and he aimed a blow at Jack with the weapon that would have felled an ox.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GIANT OF THE CLOUDS.

Jack saw that terrific blow coming and made an effort to escape it.

He saw that it would be impossible to get out of the way before the gun would reach his head.

But at that moment Fritz, having seen what had transpired from the deck of the Eagle, had drawn a pistol and fired a shot.

It took effect in the coast guard's-arm.

He yelled and dropped the rifle.

"Howly heavens, I'm kilt!" he screamed.

Jack now saw that the people who were with the man were inclined to take his part, and began to retreat toward the balloon ship.

As he did so the crowd made a rush for him.

"He kilt Dennis!" yelled one of them.

"Down wid him!" yelled another.

Then the rest began:

"Don't lave him escape!"

"Stone him!"

"Arrest the smuggler!"

"Surround the rascal!"

Jack started on a run for the aerial machine.

He was followed by a shower of missiles that pelted him all over.

But he reached the ladder.

"Stood back dere!" yelled Fritz at the crowd.

"Kill ther Dutchman!" screamed the coast-guard, savagely. Another shower of stones rattled all over the Eagle.

"Give them another shot, or they'll mob us, Fritz!" panted Jack, as he swiftly climbed up the deck.

Fritz obeyed.

At the first shot one of the leaders fell.

He yelled and squirmed on the ground, and the rest retreated.

"Can you hold them in check?" panted Jack.

"Fer sure. Vot you vos goin' ter done?"

"Try to repair that bullet hole so we can escape from here."

As Jack said this he dashed inside.

He procured some necessary articles in the storeroom and, returning to the deck, he found Fritz yelling at the mob and threatening to shoot the first one who came within fifty feet of the machine.

Jack ran up the shrouds to the concentrating hoop with a lantern, on the side where he had heard the shot strike.

A careful search revealed a small dent with a round hole in the middle where the bullet had penetrated.

By standing on the hoop, he was enabled to reach it, and apply a patch of metallic cement that hardened in the air to the consistency of a piece of steel.

As soon as the hole was plugged up, Jack shouted:

"Hey, Tim?"

"Ay, ay!" replied the old sailor, from the pilothouse.

"Start the pump, and raise her in the air."

Tim carried out this order, the machine soaring skyward as soon as the pump had emptied three-quarters of the air from the cylinder.

Up she rose with a swift motion.

As soon as she acted, Jack realized that the bullet had not passed out the other side of the cylinder.

It had merely penetrated one side, and remained lodged inside.

A wild howl escaped from the crowd when they saw the airship escaping from them by mounting straight up into the atmosphere.

Before any of them could discharge a weapon at her, she was out of sight and gunshot, as the lights were put out.

Jack descended to the deck.

"We are all right now!" he remarked.

"How dot cement will holt?" asked Fritz, anxiously.

"Just as strongly as if I had welded a piece of steel over the hole.

"Den ve don't vos needed ter put some more rebairs by her?"

"No. We can go right ahead now."

"Two thousand feet, Jack!" cried Tim at this juncture.

"That's high enough. Stop her ascent and drive her ahead."

Tim obeyed, and the Eagle flew through the air by means of her big propellers again.

She crossed Ireland, went over St. George's Channel to England, and riding high above the clouds, headed for the Hague.

When daylight finally appeared she was hovering over Holland.

Tim was at the wheel and Charley stood out on deck watching the gradually appearing landscape below from the bow.

"What's the height, Tim?" asked the aeronaut, presently.

"Height? A little more'n 1500 feet," replied the old sailor.

Just then a gust of wind struck the Eagle on the star-

board side, and the turnbuckle of the afterbrace parted with a snap like a pistol shot.

It caused the stern of the boat to drag down, and the end of the cylinder to go up several degrees.

The next moment the wire cable flew through the air and went over the stern, where it caught on the wheel shaft.

As the propeller flew around the line was wound up on the shaft until it was all coiled up.

That caused such a binding that the screw could not revolve, and there came a terrific jolting of the machinery inside.

"Good gracious!" gasped Charley, looking to see what had happened.

"Ahoy, thar!" roared Tim, in surprise. "Wot's happened?"

"The back stay has broken."

"Lordy, Lordy! I thought we wuz afallin'."

"Stop the machinery—quick!"

"Ay, ay!" said Tim, doing so.

The flight of the Eagle was stopped.

Charley ran aft, and saw that the stay was pulled as rigid as a poker.

It was impossible to make the screw revolve until it was relieved of the binding wire, and he thought that he could unwind it by going down over the stern.

There was an upright post there, and the athletic young aeronaut unhesitatingly slid down the stern until he reached the screw shaft, upon which he sat, holding to the upright.

He then saw how it became coiled around the shaft, and tried to unfasten the end.

Tim, in the meantime, had looked out the door.

He saw at a glance what had happened, and without knowing that Charley was down on the shaft, he reversed the machinery so that the shaft would unwind the cable.

Around spun the wheel suddenly, and one of the blades hitting the aeronaut, knocked him backward from his perch.

A smothered cry escaped him.

He grasped the slack of the wire cable.

Then he pitched over, and the shaft, unwinding the wire, his weight pulled it free, when down it fell.

One end was secured to a metal thimble at the stern, but the end to which Charley clung hung straight down.

The balloon ship kept backing.

Fifty feet below her keel hung the aeronaut, clinging to the wire rope with all his strength.

Then Tim started the screws the other way, and the boat dashed ahead once more, carrying the dangling aeronaut with it.

"Help! Help!" he shouted.

Tim did not hear him at once, for Jack and Fritz had sung out from below, asking what had happened to stop the Eagle.

Charley had slid to the extreme end of the line as soon as it was freed from the binding screw shaft.

Here he clung to the broken turnbuckle with all his might.

The balloon ship plunged into a dense cloud.

Scarcely had it done so when there suddenly sounded a tremendous whirring of wings close to the imperiled man.

He glanced around and observed several huge birds flying toward him from out of the mist.

They were enormous creatures of the condor species, measuring fourteen feet across the wings, hideous, repulsive and loathsome to the eye, with bare, flat, elongated heads and bare breasts, indicative of their love for carrion.

A loud, hissing noise escaped from their open mouths and there was an ugly look dormant in their eyes as they sailed toward Charley Clifton.

"By heavens! they intend to attack me!" he groaned, "and I cannot use my hands to defend myself, as I have got to hang on to this line with them!"

He shuddered with horror, for the peril he was in was extreme, and he realized it to the fullest extent.

These giants of the air, for they are the biggest of birds, circled around the young man, emitting that strange, hissing sound every moment, and he counted four of them.

Suddenly one of them darted toward him.

His massive beak and talons struck him a blow that made him sway at the end of the line like a clock pendulum, and while the claws tore his coat and gashed his skin, the awful beak sunk into the quivering flesh of his shoulder like a dagger.

A scream of pain escaped him.

"Help—help!" he shouted again, in frantic tones.

The birds soared away, startled by his cries, but they soon realized that no harm befell them, and the four came back again.

All their efforts now seemed to be directed toward plucking out his eyes and tongue—the favorite morsels of these birds.

At brief intervals first one and then another would fly at him, and striking against his body, send it rocking with a dizzy, swaying motion in all directions.

None of Charley's friends on the airship could see him, on account of the density of the cloud that enveloped them.

Again and again did the condors dart at the luckless fellow, each attack adding to the wounds he had already received, and every shock threatening to knock him from his hold on the line.

As a last resort the mighty birds all surrounded him and made a simultaneous attack on every side.

Shout after shout escaped Clifton.

He let go with one hand and tried to fight the desperate cannibals of the air away.

There he hung by one hand, receiving blow after blow from the powerful wings, and wound after wound from the talons and beaks until it seemed as if he must let go or perish where he was.

CHAPTER IX.

ELECTRIFIED.

The balloon ship was dashing ahead rapidly, and cleared the cloud-bank, when Jack heard the appealing cries of the aeronaut.

He rushed out on deck and glanced around.

Nothing of poor Clifton was seen, but as the shouts for help continued, Jack located the sound.

Rushing aft, he peered over.

Instantly he saw the aeronaut's peril.

The young inventor had no weapons with him.

Before he could get one, he feared Clifton would succumb.

"Hello, down there!" he shouted.

"Save me, Wright! Save me!" pleaded the imperiled man.

"Can't you climb up?"

"No! My strength is all gone."

"Hang on, I'll get you!"

And so saying, Jack dropped the drag-rope down.

It shot through the air, and the grapnel hit one of the condors causing it to fly swiftly away, and, reaching the end of the rope, it gave a jerk, and then swung rigidly.

In a moment more Jack slid down.

He went as swift as an arrow until he reached Clifton.

The poor fellow was covered with blood and on the verge of falling when Jack grasped him.

In a moment more Jack had him in his arms, and the ferocious condors flew away a few yards.

A groan escaped Clifton, and he fainted.

Jack had the drag-rope twined about his leg and, holding the aeronaut with one arm, he clutched the rope with his disengaged hand.

"Fritz! Tim!" he shouted.

He had to cry out several times to make himself heard.

In the meantime the condors flew back and attacked him.

All the shouting Jack did failed to frighten them away, and they flapped up against him, hissing like snakes, tearing at him with their beaks, and scratching with their powerful claws.

In the position Jack was then, he could not defend himself.

Fritz came rushing aft just then, however, and seeing how matters stood, he drew a pistol from his belt and opened fire upon the condors.

It was a pneumatic magazine pistol, the bullets being filled with Jack's high explosive compound, called Horrorite, which burst like torpedoes upon contact with the condors.

With each terrific report a bird was literally blown to pieces, for the explosive force of the shots was terrific.

Down they dropped, one after another, until the four were killed.

By this time Fritz had attracted Tim's attention.

The old sailor stopped the screws, left the pilothouse, and came stumping aft to ascertain the cause of the firing.

"Helb me to hoist dem ub!" cried the Dutchman, when he explained all.

"Ay, ay! 'Gimme a grip! Now then—heave ho! A hoyee! Heave-o!"

Together they managed to hoist Jack and his burden up to the deck, and in a few moments they were safe.

Poor Charley was in a dreadful plight.

They carried him downstairs, dressed his wounds and revived him.

He then told them how it all happened, and they discovered that his wounds, though painful, were not serious.

The backstay turnbuckle that broke was taken out, and the line was rigged up with a new one.

Fritz then served up a splendid breakfast, and the Eagle was started off again on her flight across Holland.

The sun rose presently, and the balloon ship was sent down to within a thousand feet of the ground.

No matter how high or how low an airship may be, whether by night or day, there is always a breeze blowing, of which advantage can be taken.

An idea exists in many minds that aeronauts lose sight of the earth when at a great height from it.

This is a mistake.

They never do, except when night falls or clouds intervene.

The earth is always like a great, concave map, painted different colors, which designate the various products of the soil lying below.

By nightfall the Eagle was passing over Germany at a speed of sixty miles per hour, and yet, as she was going with the wind, her crew did not feel the terrible pace which she kept up.

"How much at the mercy of balloonists are the lives of the people on the earth below," said Charley, as he went out on deck with Jack after supper. "While the aerial ship can easily keep out of range of a rifle, its occupants could destroy a city lying below it."

"Yes," answered Frank. "They were successfully used by the French during the war with Austria for observations. Indeed, John Wise, the American aeronaut, made our government propositions to destroy the castle of San Juan de Ulloa during the Mexican war with a balloon, but his offer was rejected."

But just at this point there came an interruption in the form of a wild yell from Tim, inside the boat.

It was instantly followed by a fearful crackling noise all over the boat, and a sudden burst of electric fire balls at every point where there was a conductor of electricity.

The next moment Jack and his companion felt a violent electric shock fly up through their bodies from the deck.

Bismarck and Whiskers howled like maniacs, and even Fritz in the pilothouse set up an ear-splitting yell.

Jack and the aeronaut were almost knocked down by the current.

"The Eagle is electrified!" gasped the young inventor.

"Good heavens—what has happened?"

"Follow me—lively!"

Jack dashed across the deck.

There were a number of rubber mats scattered about, and he lost no time in getting upon one, Charley doing likewise.

Here they were insulated from the current.

Peering into the pilothouse window, they saw Fritz climbing on top of the wooden wheel stand to protect himself from the current.

While so engaged, the flying machine stopped.

"Tim! What's the matter in there?" shouted Jack, nervously.

"Mein lieber Gott!" howled the Dutchman. "Someding vos pusted."

"Can't you find out what it is?"

"Nein! Nein! Couldn't you?"

"Call to Tim."

It was useless, for the old sailor just then came hopping up the stairs on his wooden leg and, reaching the wheel-room, he shouted:

"Somebody stop the dynamos—quick, or we're a goner!"

As soon as Fritz heard this he reached over and turned a switch.

That settled the electric discharge.

Its power was ended like magic, the fire balls stopped playing over the airship, and the current left her.

Jack and his companion could then tread the deck in perfect safety, and at once hurried inside, asking:

"What caused the electric discharge?"

"One o' ther generator wires was struck by a steel rod wot fell from a rack," explained Tim. "Ther gutta-percha insulation was peeled off an' ther current flew inter ther lower deck. That electrified ther whole machine."

Jack went down below and saw the rod.

The monkey and parrot stood upon it and had been receiving the current through their claws and paws as it flew from the dynamo wire.

It paralyzed them for awhile, and had so scorched their skin that when they revived and attempted to walk the soreness caused them to howl and hop at every step they ventured to take.

Jack took the bar away and put in a new wire.

Then he returned to the deck and found that the airship was approaching the city of Stuttgart at an elevation of five hundred feet.

"House on fire in the middle of the city," said Charley, as Jack appeared.

"I see it," replied the young inventor, leveling a glass at the big conflagration. "And all the fire seems to be in the lower floors of the building."

A few minutes afterward Fritz, at the wheel, uttered a cry of horror.

"Himmel! Dere vos some peoples on der roof ohf dot blek house vot's on fire, und dey, don't could got down!"

With his glass Jack saw that the Dutchman told the truth.

It was a high building, towering thirty feet above the ones

nearest to it, and on the roof there crouched a man, woman and two children.

Their escape was cut off by the raging flames all around them, and it looked as if they would roast to death.

"Fritz, could you lower the Eagle to that roof and save them?" asked Jack.

"I dry me dot, put py Shiminey, id vos taincherous. Dot fires vill be all aroundt us, Shack."

"We must risk it, or those people will perish."

"All right!" assented Fritz, lowering the machine rapidly.

They could hear the frantic, agonized shrieks of the poor people as the Eagle drew closer to them, and then an appalling heat engulfed the airship.

CHAPTER X.

DOWN TO THE BLACK SEA.

Down in the streets surrounding the burning building there was a crowd of thousands of people who had been watching the unfortunates on the roof.

They had been utterly unable to reach the endangered people, as the entire lower part of the house was in flames.

As soon as they saw the airship's lights descending from the sky, the most superstitious fears assailed them, as they did not know what the singular object was.

A tremendous shout of alarm arose.

Many of them ran away in terror.

Fritz kept lowering the Eagle rapidly.

In a few moments she was hovering directly over the roof.

The man, woman, and children saw her coming down, and becoming as terrified as the rest, tried to get out of the way.

In their panic there was every chance of their falling from the edge of the roof down to the street.

Jack observed the fright they were in.

He could speak a number of foreign languages.

"Hello, there!" he shouted in German. "Do not alarm yourselves. This is a balloon. We are coming to save you."

"Oh," replied the man, who understood what he said, "that is it, eh?"

He told his family what Jack had said.

It reassured them.

In a moment more the bottom of the ship touched the roof.

Fritz stopped her descent, and Jack dropped a rope ladder over the side.

Down climbed the young inventor to the roof, which, by this time, was buried in a cloud of choking smoke and scorching flame.

The lurid tongues leaped up all around the cylinder, and every one became parched, heated and stifled.

"Mount this ladder!" cried Jack, chokingly.

"My wife first!" groaned the man.

Up went the poor woman.

Jack and the man each carried a child.

In a moment more they were all on the Eagle's deck.

"Go, Fritz."

"All aboard?"

"Yes."

Fritz did not comply any too soon.

A terrible crash sounded down below.

The burning building was falling.

Up shot the balloon ship just as the house fell.

There sounded an awful grinding and splitting.

A vast cloud of smoke and sparks arose, enveloping the airship.

She shot into the air, and the building fell.

A wild cry escaped the horrified spectators in the street.

Up—up, mounted the Eagle a thousand feet, then she glided away.

Presently she got beyond the heat and smoke, and Fritz stopped her.

"Vot vay now, Shack?" demanded the young Dutchman.

"Drop her down into the public square in the city," answered Jack.

While Fritz was doing this, the young inventor spoke to the people he saved, who were crouched in a group on the deck, awed at their situation.

"How came you caught by the fire?" asked Jack, in kind tones.

"We lived on the top floor of the house," replied the man keenly looking at the young inventor. "The fire broke out downstairs. Our retreat to the street was cut off. So high up were we that the firemen and the people could not reach us. We were doomed."

"It was the will of God that you were not to perish."

Tears filled the man's eyes.

He was greatly agitated for a moment.

Then he said, in broken tones:

"I have never believed in God until this terrible ordeal came. Now my trust is implicit. I have been shown that a higher power than that of mortal men exists."

"Your trouble has been a severe, but a good lesson," said Jack.

The man bowed his head in assent.

He wanted to thank Jack for what he had done.

"No," said the young inventor, interrupting him, "do not give thanks to me. Address yourself to the Almighty, in whose hands I am but an humble agent, sent here to save you so that you might see the error of your disbelief."

The balloon ship had been descending while he was talking, and in a few minutes more it settled down in the public square.

A rush was made by throngs of people coming from all directions, who now saw what the airship was, and in a few moments she was surrounded by a large mob.

The man, woman and children whom Jack had saved then descended in safety to the ground, and a tremendous cheer burst from the throats of every one who saw them.

Jack waved his cap to the multitude.

"All ready, Fritz!" he shouted.

"Den I sent her oop alretty," replied the Dutchman.

He started the air pump.

As soon as the vacuum was completed, up bounced the Eagle into the air, followed by the shouts of the spectators.

Higher and higher she soared, watched intently by the astonished and grateful people, until at last she vanished from their view in the clouds, at an altitude of 2,000 feet.

Tim and Charley came out on deck.

"We have done some good so far with the Eagle," said Jack, in tones of great satisfaction. "I would scarcely have considered my journey complete if I had not been able to make the ship be of service to some one besides ourselves."

"An' them 'ere lubbers in ther city must be a-wonderin' who we is," laughed Tim, as he took a chew of tobacco.

"High enough?" shouted Fritz.

"Yes. Stop her ascent and head her for the Black Sea," replied Jack.

The young Dutchman carried out this order promptly, and the balloon ship sped away rapidly in the teeth of a strong air current.

"Queer how we can feel it when we are running against the wind," said Clifton. "Now, in ballooning, an aeronaut seldom feels the wind, as the gas bag is carried along with the current. Indeed, in all my experience, I have found that it

makes no difference whether I am going one mile an hour, or one hundred miles an hour, there seems to be the same immobility of the balloon."

"It has always been contended that no airship could be devised that would sail against the wind," laughed Jack, "and yet this feat was always made apparent by a little trick aeronauts sometimes employ."

"What do you allude to?"

"When a balloon is descending, if it is falling on a house or tree, the balloonist can easily steer it away from the object by fanning the air with an ordinary palm leaf fan."

"That's so," assented Clifton. "I've found that to be true myself."

The Eagle sped through the clouds all night long, and crossing Austria-Hungary, she appeared over Roumania the next morning.

In the distance there was a vast patch of black, which they made out to be the Black Sea, and the Eagle was lowered.

When she arrived within a thousand feet of the sea, Jack pulled the lever to close the valves.

Instead of operating, the valves remained open.

"Why don't you stop her?" asked Charley, who was with Jack.

"I can't. Something is the matter, for the valves won't close," the young inventor replied, in anxious tones.

"Then we will fall into the sea."

Tim and Fritz came up from below just then, and were told what had occurred.

Down—down shot the airship toward the water.

CHAPTER XI.

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

The sea, down toward which the balloon ship was plunging bears a certain resemblance to a human foot, and throughout its entire extent has but one island, called the Isle of Serpents.

Upon this small patch of ground stands a Russian light-house.

It stands opposite the mouth of the Danube river, and is occupied by the Russians in open defiance of the stipulations of a treaty signed at Paris, at the end of the Crimean war.

The isle, being held by the Russians, occasioned a great deal of uneasiness in Turkey, and several attempts were made by the sultan of the latter country to gain possession of it.

The Eagle landed in the water not far from this island, her movements having been detected by the people on the island before she touched the water.

With a tremendous splash she alighted, and sunk to her gunwhales.

But her buoyancy as a ship easily sustained her, and she came to the top and floated like a cork.

"Hurrah!" roared Tim. "She floats arter all!"

"It's a wonder her cylinder don't make her top-heavy," said Charley.

"Impossible," replied Jack. "It's too light."

"Why don't it come down on deck?"

"Because the two upright pipes hold it aloft."

"If a gale of wind struck her, she'd capsize."

"But she couldn't sink."

Fritz had stopped the machinery, and now came out on deck.

An examination of the valves was made to see why they did not operate, when it was ascertained that the springs that kept them closed in the same manner that balloon valves operate, had snapped in two.

The result of this accident was manifest.

Having nothing to hold them shut, the inward suction of the vacuum had pulled them open, and held them so until the cylinder filled with air.

Jack took out the broken springs.

He then went down to the storeroom to get another pair.

While he was absent Tim observed a steam tug come out from the island and run toward the aerial ship.

She was loaded with Russian soldiers.

"Gee whiz!" he exclaimed. "Looker them sojers a-comin'."

"Russians!" exclaimed Charley.

"Vot dey vant mit us?" demanded Fritz.

"Werry likely they wishes ter help us."

"See! They are signalling to us!"

"Vill ve let 'em coom apoart?"

"Ay, ay! I can't understand their lingo, but Jack kin."

The tug now ran up to them, and the officer in command of the troops shouted something to our friends in his native tongue.

As no one could understand him, no reply was vouchsafed, and the tug ran alongside of the balloon ship.

In a moment more the officer and his men boarded her.

To the astonishment of the three, the troops aimed their rifles at them, and the officer said something.

"They means fight!" gasped Tim, in amazement.

"Lieber Gott! Und ve don't vos got some veapons!"

"Hands up, or they'll shoot!" exclaimed Charley.

He had, luckily, solved the means of saving their lives, for, had they not all raised their hands in token of submission, it was more than likely that they would have been shot.

As soon as the officer observed their actions, a cynical smile crossed his bearded face and he addressed his men.

Three of them rapidly separated themselves from the rest, and striding toward the three, they grasped each one by an arm and marched them toward the deck of the tug.

"Blast 'em, they're a-goin' ter take us aboard o' thar craft!" growled Tim, when he saw the intention of the Russians.

"Don't resist. It's as much as our lives are worth, perhaps, to fight against them," said Charley, wisely.

"Shiminey Christmas! Vot ve done dot dey arrest us?" savagely growled Fritz. "Must ve been taken like sheepses—mitoud a fights?"

"If you value your life you will," said one of the soldiers, just then.

He could speak English, and had heard all they had said.

His object in maintaining silence before was to hear what they said.

"Ah, you speak our language," said Charley.

"Silence!" was the gruff reply. "Board that tug!"

"But why are we arrested?"

"Hush, I say! You will find out later."

Tim was not going to let them get Jack, if he could prevent it.

Foreseeing that they would be silenced soon, he yelled:

"Hey, Jack! Look out! Enemies has boarded us, and——"

Bang! went a heavy hand over his mouth, stifling all further utterance, and the three were pushed aboard of the tug.

Several of the soldiers rushed for the wheel-room door, but ere they could reach it, Jack closed and bolted it.

He had heard Tim's warning and had seen what had occurred.

The next moment he closed the metal window shutters and was secure against invasion.

The Russians fired a volley of rifle shots at the door, but they failed to pierce the aluminum plates.

Jack's ire was aroused by this warlike demonstration.

"The beggars are up to mischief!" he muttered.

Grasping a pneumatic rifle, he manned a loop-hole, and opened fire on the troops.

An uproar ensued among them.

They retreated to the tug, leaving one of their number lying wounded upon the Eagle's deck.

Jack continued to fire.

Then there sounded the violent clang of a bell, and the tug rushed away toward the island, carrying off the three prisoners.

Jack stopped firing.

Rushing out on the deck he fell upon the wounded soldier and brought him into the wheel-house.

Here he deprived the man of his weapons and bound him.

As soon as this was done, he started the big screw, and drove the balloon ship far out to sea.

No sooner was he out of range of the Russian rifles than he went out and repaired the broken valves.

The Eagle was thus rendered as good as ever, and the young inventor lost no time in putting the air pump in operation.

All the atmosphere was sucked out of the cylinder, and the Eagle began to rise from the sea.

Streams of water ran off her hull as she soared upward, and Jack stopped her ascent at a height of two hundred feet.

He then drove her toward the tug.

Before he could overtake it, however, the boat landed the soldiers and prisoners, and they got under shelter of a stone fort.

"Baffled!" cried the angry young inventor.

How he was to get possession of his friends he did not know.

Turning to the groaning prisoner as he stopped the balloon ship, he asked him in the Russian language:

"What impelled your men to attack us?"

"Why," replied the soldier, "to forestall you."

"Are you mad? We did not intend to injure you?"

"Ah, but we are not to be deceived. For detaining the English frigate in this sea, Great Britain has declared that it would combine with the Turks to drive us out. The sight of your airship has shown us plainly enough that she means to keep her word."

"But we are not English!" said Jack.

"You are!"

"We are Americans!"

"Americans?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean to deny that you are either English spies, or a band sent to drive us from the Isle of Serpents?"

"Of course I do. We are merely a band of American tourists taking a pleasure trip in my new airship around the world."

"Why did you land here then?" distrustfully asked the man.

"An accident compelled us to."

An incredulous look crossed the man's face.

It was very evident that he and his companions were very thoroughly convinced that Jack and his friends were enemies and it was equally as evident that no amount of persuasion could convince him or his friends to the contrary.

"What are the intentions of your companions upon my friends?" asked the young inventor, presently.

"They will be killed as soon as possible!" was the startling reply.

Jack saw that the man meant every word he said.

He gave a start, and flinging open the window, he peered out.

The balloon ship had drifted away from the place where

she had first come to a pause. This was caused by a strong breeze that was blowing.

He then drove her over toward the fortress.

A few minutes afterward the airship hovered over it.

Going out on deck, Jack peered down.

The fort laid in the form of a hollow square beneath him.

At that moment he caught sight of Charley, Tim and Fritz being led out into the courtyard.

They had their hands bound behind their backs, bandages were tied over their eyes, and they stood in a row against a wall.

A file of Russian soldiers, armed with rifles, followed them from within the fortress, led by the officer who had boarded the Eagle.

Jack gave a start of alarm when he saw these preparations.

They verified his captive's assertion that the prisoners would be executed as soon as possible.

"So autocratic and tyrannical are these wretches," muttered Jack, "they have condemned my friends without trial. As they have shown no mercy, neither shall I."

He rushed inside as he spoke.

The three prisoners stood like statues, with their backs to the wall, their heads bowed, and the soldiers drew up before them.

At a distance of fifty paces they stood in file, and their officer gave them some directions.

He then stepped aside.

Up to the shoulders of the troops the rifles were raised, and each man aimed at the three prisoners, with the evident intention of shooting them down where they stood.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE MOUNTAINS.

"By thunder, they won't kill them if I can stop the massacre!"

And as Jack gave utterance to this assertion, he came dashing out of the wheel-house with several bombs in his hand.

The grenades were loaded with a powerful explosive.

Jack reached the rail just in time to see the Russian soldiers aim their weapons to fire at his friends.

He raised one of the bombs and hurled it with deadly aim straight down at the file of troops.

It struck the stone pavement in back of them and burst.

A terrible report followed.

It was echoed by a wild yell.

The soldiers lowered their weapons and scattered.

Two of them fell to the ground mortally wounded.

Again and again Jack dropped the destructive missiles down at them, every violent report making the ground tremble and the air vibrate with the echo.

Losing not an instant in order to take advantage of their panic, the young inventor rushed inside and opened the air valves.

Down sunk the Eagle into the courtyard.

She landed upon her flanges and the daring scientist alighted with a knife in his hand, and rushed up to his friends.

"Run for the Eagle!" he shouted, as he cut their bonds.

They tore off their blindfolds.

A cheer for gallant Jack burst from their lips when they saw who it was that came to their rescue.

They ran for the balloon ship.

Everything was done with extreme rapidity.

They all got aboard before the Russians fairly recovered from their tremendous shock of surprise.

Fritz procured some more of the bombs.

Just as the soldiers came swarming out of the doors with their weapons to fire at the intrepid fellows, the combative Dutchman let the bombs fly at them.

Loud explosions, the humming of the flying particles and yells of pain, rage, and panic followed the bursting of the bombs.

Jack had run into the wheel-house.

"If they put a ball through the cylinder we can't mount!" he cried.

"D'yer want this lubber?" asked Tim, pointing at the prisoner.

"No; he is of no further use to me now," said Jack, pulling a lever.

"Then I'll heave him overboard, my lad!"

And so saying, Tim grasped the man, raised him from the floor and pushed to the side with him.

Just then several of the soldiers were upon the point of firing a volley at the aerial ship, but seeing their comrades, and fearing to hit him, they paused.

That gave Fritz an opportunity to hurl another grenade at them.

The exploding missile caused them to yell and run just as the old sailor hurled the prisoner from the boat.

At the same juncture, the pump having drawn out the air, the cylinder mounted to the heavens.

Up, up she shot like a bird on the wing.

As she flew up a number of the soldiers appeared on top of the fort, and fired a volley at the airship.

The bullets rattled about her hull like hail, but failed to pierce it.

Jack started the screws.

The boat rushed toward the lighthouse.

A man stood on the tower platform watching her.

"Give my regards to your commander!" cried Jack, in the Russian tongue, to the man, "and tell him we may ascend to the clouds and drop dynamite bombs on the island, and destroy it, and its inhabitants!"

A howl of horror escaped the lighthouse keeper.

He rushed inside and disappeared from view.

A merry peal of laughter escaped Jack, and when he told his companions how he had frightened the man, they smiled grimly.

"You don't mean to do it, do you?" asked Clifton, soberly.

"Why, no. Just look down if you want to see some fun now!"

The aeronaut complied.

By this time they were out of gunshot range.

A few moments afterward our friends saw boatload after boatload of people leaving the island and rowing to the main land in hot haste.

The lighthouse keeper had evidently made known to them Jack's threat, and they had taken alarm, and fled to escape the consequence.

Passing up through a mass of clouds the air ship shot into a region that shut out all further view of the land below.

Charley then went inside.

"You've scared them away!" he laughed.

"How did they happen to attack you?" the young inventor asked.

Charley explained.

In conclusion, he added:

"They carried us ashore with the tug, and conducted us into the fortress where we were charged by a soldier who spoke English, with being spies in the employ of the British government. Although we pleaded the truth of the matter, they would not listen to us. We were ordered to be shot at

once. Then they blindfolded us and led us out into the yard from whence you saved us."

"This proceeding is in keeping with the general mode of the Russian petty officers," said Jack. "But we have taught them a lesson they won't forget in a hurry."

He stopped the further ascent of the balloon ship, and steered her over the 700 miles expanse of the sea toward the shores of the Trans Caucassia, in a southeasterly direction.

The Eagle had come to a pause in a powerful current of air which carried her along so swiftly in conjunction with her propellers that she logged one hundred miles an hour.

It was late in the afternoon before she had crossed the sea, and when the shadows of twilight fell they caught sight of the town of Poti, on the Rion river.

Afar in the distance arose the great range of the Caucasus mountains, up from which towered the enormous peak of Mount Elbruz.

Jack now lowered the Eagle until the gauge indicated a height of 1,700 feet from the sea—not the Black Sea, as that is higher than the ocean.

Just then the supper bell rang, and Jack put the wheel in Tim's hands and went downstairs with Charley.

Fritz had an excellent repast ready for them, and while they were eating told Jack that their supply of water was running very low.

"I don't vould vant ter gone down mit der deserts ohf Arabia mitoud dot've our gasks vos filled," said the Dutchman. "If you done dot mebbe ve don't got some yust when ve most wanted id alretty."

"Then we'd better drop her down on the mountains," said Jack, "for there are no end of springs and streams there. I'll tell Tim."

When he went up he explained to the old sailor what was wanted.

"That's easy enough done," said Tim, "'cause I've been a-steerin' her to scrape ther summits o' that range."

"You wouldn't scrape Mount Elbruz at this height," said Jack, "for that peak stands about 18,526 feet high."

"But we've passed it an' left it astarn," said Tim.

"What is that big peak ahead there?"

"Must be Mount Kazbeck."

"Ah, yes. She stands 16,540 feet high, and we are only up 2,000 feet. You can let her settle on that hill, old fellow. I'll go out with a night glass and keep watch for a stream."

The old sailor nodded, and Jack left him.

In a short time they reached the mighty peak and ran toward Eng pass, leading over to Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea."

By the time the airship reached the side of the mountain, she did not descend any, but the wooded slopes brought their tree tops close below the keel of the boat.

The scene down from there into the enormous Caucasian valley was one of supreme grandeur.

Jack posted himself in the bow with a glass and kept a careful watch of the land below.

The airship glided over a wild forest, and coming to a wide split in the middle of it, Jack suddenly shouted:

"Stop her, Tim!"

"Foun wot ye want, my lad?" asked the old sailor, obeying.

"Look down there. Don't you hear the roar?"

Below them the division of the woods was formed by a great rocky canyon that came down the mountain side.

A sparkling stream poured through this wild ravine, and at its entrance terminated in a high, wide fall, the waters of which sent a dull, smothered rumble up to the boat.

It could not be anything but fresh water.

"Shall I drop her in the canyon, or below it?" asked Tim.

"Below—among the trees and rocks. See the clearing?"

"Ay, ay! I reckon I can strike it, too."

Tim managed the flying machine with consummate skill, and she descended into a huge, bowl-like indentation under the fall.

Here she alighted with a gentle shock close to the boiling rapids formed by the fall that ran through a narrow defile.

Every one alighted for a run on land for a change.

The solitude of the lonely place was broken by the rumbling of the falling waters, the cries of the night birds and the howls of jackals.

Jack made a detour among the trees, and to his surprise, found a path that led to the water's edge.

"It must have been made by the wild beasts that come here to drink," he cogitated, as he strode among the rocks toward the stream to taste the water, and see if it were fit to drink.

He had not gone a dozen paces, however, when he heard a crashing among the bushes in the gloom at one side, the low hum of human voices, and then a fierce growl.

In a moment more an enormous mountain bear shot into view, its body covered with wounds that goaded it to madness.

It glared balefully at Jack one brief instant, and then ere he realized what its intention was it rushed for him.

Down he fell in a heap as its huge head struck him, and the brute flew at him with fiery eyes and distended jaws.

A cry of intense horror pealed from Jack's lips, and he made an effort to arise and escape.

Before he could get on his feet the bear rushed at him again.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN A CIRCLE OF FIRE.

Jack had an ordinary sheath knife in his belt, and pulling it out, he held the point toward the bear with both hands.

The beast was coming for the young inventor's head.

It could not avoid the knife.

It plunged straight upon it.

There came a sibilant hiss as the point ran into the monster's head, and a wild, fierce growl escaped it as the side of its face was cut open.

A torrent of blood gushed from the wound all over Jack.

The beast then recoiled.

Having an opportunity now, Jack bounded to his feet.

He had no chance to get away, however.

Filled with pain, rage and spite, the bear rushed for him again.

Now it went up on its haunches, and flinging out its claws, they caught in the young inventor's coat.

He was pulled over to the monster in a tight embrace.

Jack fought and struggled with all his strength and energy to get away, and the roaring bear dealt the knife a blow and knocked it from his hand.

Disarmed, he was now placed entirely at the creature's mercy.

It seemed to realize it.

It opened its red mouth to bury the formidable teeth in the young inventor's neck, and Jack saw that it was useless to try to prevent it.

At this critical juncture a volley of spears and arrows flew out of the shrubbery in back of the monster, and pierced its body.

A tremor passed over the gigantic figure.

Its hairy arms relaxed their grip on the young man.

In a moment more it was rolling on the ground in a fearful paroxysm of pain, tearing up the dirt, stone and grass with its claws, and uttering the fiercest cries.

Seeing his knife lying close by upon the ground, Jack ran for it and picked it up.

In a moment more he stood over the bear and plunged the blade into its heart.

It was killed instantly.

A sigh of intense relief escaped Jack.

Hearing the sound of flying footsteps approaching, he glanced around and saw a dozen natives of the mountains.

They were a tribe of Lesghians—fanatical Mohammedans—who ranged the mountains hunting, fought against subjugation by Russia, and were characterized by cruelty, treachery, and a love for robbery.

These people had seen Jack fighting the bear.

Now they rushed up to him and began to talk in Turkish-Tartar.

Jack did not understand them, and signified the fact.

They surrounded him, still talking.

Before he fairly realized their intention, two on each side seized him, the knife was wrenched from his hand, and he was flung down.

They held him on his back, and their prophet chief, Schamyl, by name, deliberately began to rifle his pockets.

"Thieves!" ejaculated the young inventor. "This is a funny way to do—save my life so they could rob me."

Everything of value was taken away from him.

"Unhand me, you treacherous hounds!" cried Jack, in angry tones, as he struggled to break loose. "I did not have the strength of the bear, but, by thunder, I'll match any two of you!"

He tore himself free.

Then he got upon his feet.

Out shot his fist, catching the prophet in the eye.

Schamyl whooped.

Then he landed on his back.

Right and left Jack punched at the Lesghians.

They went down like ten-pins.

Some of the less valorous fled.

Biff, bang, thump! went Jack's fists against the devoted noses, jaws, chins and necks of the howling Mohammedans.

A scene of excitement ensued.

The natives were not accustomed to this mode of warfare, and they retreated into the woods to get their weapons in order.

Fortunately for Jack, the Dutchman and the sailor appeared at this juncture, armed with revolvers.

"Ahoy thar, my hearty!" roared the old sailor.

"Help, boys, help!" cried Jack.

"Dot seddles id! Shoot dem!" roared Fritz.

They fired several shots, wounded three of the mountaineers, and sent them flying in all directions, very much alarmed.

"Here's some fresh meat for your larder, Fritz."

"Ve spit the garcass, and garry it apoard."

A suitable pole was procured, and this plan was carried out.

The natives did not trouble them, but they lurked in the woods reconnoitering to get an effective shot at our friends.

Jack tried the water, and found that it was pure and wholesome, whereupon the casks were filled by means of a hose and force pump.

This had hardly been done when Charlie suddenly called out:

"Those scamps are setting the woods on fire!"

"Fools! They imagine they can burn us out!" laughed

Jack.

"Wat cruel natured lubbers they is!" growled Tim.

"Don't ve besser got out ohf here?" asked Fritz, uneasily.

A circle of fire had been started by their enemies all around the boat, and as the dry leaves, twigs and bushes flared up, the wind began to carry the flames toward the airship.

Our friends went inside the pilothouse.

Here Jack pulled the pump lever.

But the machinery did not operate the right way.

"Hello! We have been too confident!" exclaimed Jack, in startled tones.

He rushed downstairs to examine the air pump, and entering the engine room, saw that it was working.

There was no air being forced out of the cylinder, however.

A quick examination showed that there was nothing broken about the machinery.

A dull noise came from the piston, however.

It was clear that the trouble laid in the air chest, and he could not find out what it was until he opened it.

This would require time, during which the fire was bound to reach the airship.

Losing no time in useless speculation, Jack procured a wrench, and unscrewing the nuts, took them off and opened the box.

Here he observed that the leather sucker was broken, and for that reason failed to draw the air from the cylinder.

Nothing could be done, save to set in a new one, and this he proceeded to do as rapidly as possible.

In the meantime the fire reached the Eagle.

It roared up around her and imparted a frightful heat.

She was soon buried in the midst of the conflagration.

Every one in the boat began to suffer when the air became hot and stifling, and Fritz rushed down to Jack and yelled:

"Shiminey Christmas! The fire vos all aroundt us alretty!"

"I can't work any faster," replied Jack.

"Don't I could helb yer?"

"No," replied Jack, tersely.

"Vot's der madder mit der bump?"

"Sucker is broken!"

Jack replaced a new one.

Then he began to put the plate back.

Waves of heat were now shimmering through the room, and the parrot and monkey howled and yelled uneasily.

Tim and Charley then came down.

"Great Lord!" shouted the old sailor, "thar hull is gettin' red hot."

Jack kept on working.

He got the plate in position.

Then he began to screw on the nuts.

"Tim, run up and start the pump!" he cried.

"Ay ay! It's about time. We'll soon roast in here."

The roaring of the flames outside was like the beating of surf.

Tim hastened up into the wheel-room and pulled the lever.

By that time the plate had been secured by most of the bolts, the sucker operated, and the vacuum was made.

To every one's delight, the Eagle ascended and left the midst of the fiery furnace like a veritable salamander.

Up, up she soared, rapidly cooling, as she left the fire behind, and entered the cold, rare regions of the atmosphere.

Jack completed his task and went upstairs to the deck.

It was so hot that he dared not remain.

Nor could they remain suspended in the air, as the contraction of the metal by the cold was likely to crack it.

At some distance away Jack observed a rocky plateau, and he directed Tim to bring the Eagle to a pause there.

When this was done, air was let into the cylinder, and she remained most all night cooling off.

Fritz secured the choicest portions of the bear, and flung the rest away.

At break of day the balloon ship was started off leisurely to the southward, and passing the great mud springs at the end of the great mountain range, she hovered over the foot hills.

Jack arose and went out on the forward deck.

Below them there was a great slope running down to the Kur river.

As the young inventor glanced down toward the valley, he was startled to see a band of what looked like Turks, mounted upon fiery little Arabian horses, flying down the hill.

They were evidently in hot pursuit of a man in the garb of a French soldier who was riding a bay horse, and carried a girl, dressed as a Georgian, on the saddle in front of him.

Along down the hill they went like an avalanche, the soldier firing back shot after shot from his revolvers at the Turks.

The lances of the natives danced and gleamed in the sunshine, their mantles flowed back with the wind, and yell after yell escaped them as they urged on their steeds to the top of their speed.

It was a wild, exciting chase.

Jack saw that death was in store for that soldier and girl.

"Tim?" he cried, excitedly. "See! Down the hill there!"

"Ay, ay! I sees 'em, Jack."

"To the rescue."

Away shot the airship toward the flying horde.

CHAPTER XIV.

A STORY THAT NEVER WAS TOLD.

As the soldier's horse reached the foot of the slope, it stumbled.

Down it went, throwing the rider and the girl to the ground.

A wild yell of exultation pealed from the lips of the Turks, for they now felt confident of capturing him.

Along they dashed, screaming and brandishing their weapons, and the soldier scrambled to his feet and assisted the girl to rise.

In a moment more the brave fellow had entrenched the girl and himself behind the body of the fallen steed.

The animal's leg was broken.

It would never again be available, and the Frenchman mercifully shot it to end its suffering.

From behind the animal's body he now opened fire upon his enemies, every report from his weapon sending one of the Turks reeling from the saddle.

The rest of the wild horde were maddened by the deaths of their companions, and pressed on vengefully, eager and determined to make the gallant fellow pay dearly for his work.

It was evident that the soldier meant to sell his life hard.

He saw that he could expect no mercy from those barbarians, and with a courage that was sublime, never faltered.

Shot after shot was fired back at him from the long muskets wielded by the Turks, but the carcass of the horse protected the man and the girl.

The mad rush of the Turks did not abate.

In two minutes more they would reach the brave Frenchman, ride over him, and trample and stab him to death.

But just then the Eagle shot down from the sky between the natives and their intended victims.

A tremendous yell of affright escaped the Turks.

They swerved their flying steeds to the right and left, they

howled to Mohamet to protect them, they flung down their arms, they jumped to the ground, and in short acted like maniacs.

The balloon ship landed.

Fritz, Clifton and Tim were out on deck.

They had armed themselves with a number of hand grenades, and they proceeded to let them drive at the Turks as speedily as possible, the reports pealing out like thunder.

Masses of dirt were flung high in the air by the exploding shells, and through the clouds of dust flew those of the Turks who escaped, while many of them dropped with their horses, badly wounded.

An appalling scene ensued.

The cries that arose were pitiful.

"Look out they don't fire back and open the cylinder!" cried Jack.

"Gee whiz! Here comes ther soldier an' his lass!" shouted Tim.

"I'll help them aboard!" said Clifton. "They know what this machine is."

"Donnervetter! Don'd stob!" roared the pugnacious Fritz, as he hurled bomb after bomb. "Do yer vant any ohf dem ter live?"

Boom! Boom! Boom! thundered the bombs.

Clifton lowered the ladder.

Then the Frenchman carried the girl up to the deck.

No sooner did Jack see them safe when he feared a revolution might take place, and he pulled the pump lever.

Up glided the airship into the sky like a rocket, and before the Mohammedans recovered from their fright the Eagle had soared far beyond the reach of their bullets.

"Hurrah!" roared Tim. "We've saved the lad an' his gal."

The rest cheered lustily, for it had looked very much as if they would not arrive in time to do it.

Having brought the balloon ship to a pause, Jack came out on deck and peered over the railing.

Upon the ground lay a number of the men and horses, and the rest, scattered in all directions, were speeding away, ever and anon glancing up in fright at the Eagle.

"Gentlemen," said the soldier, in French, "this seems to be a miracle. I profoundly thank you. But tell me, in heaven's name, what sort of a balloon is this?"

"A new invention," replied Jack, as he was the only one who understood the man. "How came you in such a peril?"

"The Turks had raided a Georgian village and carried away this poor girl to sell her as a slave. I stole her from their encampment to set her free, and they pursued me."

"We just arrived in time, then."

"Had you not done so, we would have been killed."

"To where were you going?"

"Back to Elizabethpool."

"I shall transport you there."

And so saying, Jack returned to the wheel-house.

Steering the Eagle toward the town in question, it soon hove in sight.

She then descended near the garrison.

All the soldiers saw her coming down, and as the French are well versed in ballooning, it did not take them long to see what it was.

Their astonishment was intense when they saw their friend and the girl alight from the airship.

The soldier was very grateful for the service rendered, and he was delighted with the wonderful actions of the balloon ship.

He rushed among his friends, and in his quick way of talking, rapidly explained what had transpired.

Overwhelmed with enthusiasm, every soldier in the place cheered and cheered our friends.

"If we stay here they'll overcome us," laughed Jack, as he waved his cap to them. "All ready to ascend, boys."

The Frenchmen were greatly disappointed to see the wonderful air racer fly up before they could see more of her, or get better acquainted with her daring crew.

Our friends heard them cheering when they were high in the air, and then a salute was fired from their guns that awoke the echoes far and near.

In a few minutes the Eagle flew through the clouds and vanished from the sight of the earth.

"That was one of the finest rescues I ever witnessed," said Charley to the Dutchman and the sailor. "I'm proud of our work."

"Yah, dot vos goot!" assented Fritz, complacently.

Tim only sniffed.

"Lor!" said he. "I saw a better one than that."

"You did?"

"Ay, ay!"

"Where?"

"In ther navy."

"Bosh!"

"Don't ver believe me?"

"No."

"Then I'll prove it."

"Do so."

"Yer see, it happened when I wuz aboard o' ther ole frigate Wabash——"

"Donner und blitzten!" roared Fritz. "Dot seddles id!"

He rushed into the pilothouse.

Tim glared balefully at him with his solitary good eye.

"Lubber!" he growled.

"Go ahead!" said Charley. "Don't mind him."

"All right, my lad. You at least, is a gentleman. As I wuz a-sayin'——"

But then Fritz began to play a terrible grind on his accordeon.

Tim stopped short.

A scowl as black as a thunder cloud mantled his rugged brow.

"Blast that bloody pirate!" he yelled.

"Don't pay any attention to him, Tim," grinned Charley.

"Gosh blame it, lad, it ain't him, it's that cussed accordeon."

"I want to hear that yarn, Tim."

"All right. I'll tell it ter yer, but——"

"Toodle-dun! Toodle-dun! Tidly-o-tidly-o!" howled the accordeon.

Tim tried to stand it.

But the effort was a dismal failure.

"Ahoy, thar! Stow that playin', will yer?" he shouted, furiously.

But Fritz whanged and wheezed away, ignoring his command, much as if he had not heard it.

Tim's patience gave out.

He spit on his hands, rubbed them together, and swore.

Then he made a bee-line for the pilothouse.

"I'll tell yer that story arter I murder ther Dutchman, my lad!" he yelled to Charley, and then he scudded away.

A roar of laughter pealed from the aeronaut's lips.

He saw Tim plunge madly inside and dash downstairs.

Scarcely had the old fellow disappeared when Fritz came from behind the door where he had been hidden.

He had a broad grin on his face, winked at Charley and hunched:

"I vo' fooled him dot time, don't it?"

"Keep it going!" laughed the aeronaut.

Then Fritz started again.

It soon had the desired effect.

Up came Tim, swearing at every step.

Fritz stopped and dodged behind the wheel-house.

"Whar is he?" roared the old sailor, glaring around. "Show me that blasted land pirate till I wipe up the deck with him."

"Didn't you see him down below?"

"Why, no," said Tim, with a mystified look.

"Well, that's where he went, wasn't it?"

"Ay, now I reckon it wuz!"

"Then how could he be up here?"

"I reckoned I heerd him on deck."

"An oral delusion. The music was ringing in your ears and deceived you," assured Charley, as he saw Fritz dodge in and downstairs behind the puzzled old sailor's back.

"Sure enough, that must a been it," assented Tim. "Waal, I'll spare his life now, an' spin ther yarn, 'cause ther fact is I've got over bein' mad now, an'——"

"Hey, Tim," interposed Jack, just then.

"Ay, ay, lad!"

"Come in here and take your trick at the wheel."

"Dumped agin!" growled Tim, in disgust. "Thar must be somethin' agin' my spinnin' that yarn. But I'll tell it to yer if yer'll come inside."

"Can't," asserted Charley. "I've got to do duty as lookout here."

So Tim had to give it up.

CHAPTER XV.

BURIED ALIVE.

"Hang on for your lives!"

"Mein Gott! Der grapnel will not hold!"

"The propellers have stopped, Wright!"

"An' I can't make ther Eagle go up or down."

It was late in the afternoon a week later when these cries arose from the four occupants of the airship.

She had come down over Persia from a high altitude, covered with snow and ice, and pausing within one hundred feet of the plain of Lushar, the machine suddenly stopped.

A terrible sandstorm had come up and struck the airship. Her valves had been closed and froze fast.

Until the cold left the metal pipes they could not open them, and as there was something the matter with the machinery it was impossible to work the screws or pumps.

This storm was what the Turks call the samiel.

It was first indicated by a thin haze along the horizon which quickly grew denser and overspread the whole sky.

Fierce gusts of wind followed, accompanied with clouds of red and burning sand, presenting the appearance of huge columns of dust whirling forth with great rapidity.

Vast mounds of sand were transported from place to place by the terrible energy of the tempest, and a red glow hovered over the land.

The balloon ship was helpless in its grasp.

It floated like an ordinary balloon now, at the mercy of the blast, and at the first blow was driven along furiously.

There was a forest athwart their course.

She struck the topmost branches of the trees with a fierce crackling and snapping of the limbs, tearing through them like a reaping machine.

Then she bounded up in the air, reeling and swaying as if she might topple over at any moment.

Every one followed the advice of Jack, and hung on for their lives.

The young inventor had but one hope of saving the Eagle from destruction, and that was to sink to the ground.

As the valves were frozen out, the atmosphere was bound

to thaw them loose in a short time, for they were then suffering frightfully from the intense heat.

The storm arose from a cause that was bound to aid them.

Owing to the great power of the sun's rays, the extreme dryness of the air, and the small conducting power of the sand causing the accumulation of heat upon the surface, the superficial layers were heated to 200 degrees.

The air resting on this hot sand became greatly heated, thus giving rise to ascending currents.

Consequently, the air flowed from all sides toward these heated places, and the different currents meeting, cyclones, or whirling masses of air, were formed and swept onward by the wind.

A hot, choking dust so filled the atmosphere that it would have killed our friends had they not closed the doors and windows.

The Eagle bounded up for a distance of several hundred feet after striking the branches of the trees, and our friends expected to fall heavily to the ground when she cleared the woods.

In this expectation they were happily disappointed.

The surface area of the airship, combined with the buoyancy she already possessed, caused her to act like a parachute.

Her descent was swift, but not as fast as it might have been had she been in a state of utter collapse.

Down she came at an angle.

Before she reached her equilibrium she was caught in one of the whirling vortices alluded to.

Here a terrible experience awaited our friends.

She was whirled around and around with dizzy velocity, flinging the four occupants to all sides of the wheel-house, and causing the monkey and parrot to yell with fear.

Then she was knocked over until her cylinder and the side of the boat rode flush on an equal plane, after which she was projected forward like a cannon ball.

Along she was shot with amazing rapidity, at one moment hovering within a few yards of the ground, and at the next hurled high up into the air.

At the last descent she made she had reached the side of one of the great sand dunes of that country, and struck.

Fortunately the side of the boat hit the sand.

There came a terrible shock, a jingle of the glass panes, broken in the windows, and then a bellowing roar of the wind, followed by the clicking of the sand blowing over her.

Jack was, like his companions, almost blinded, for with the breaking of the glass, clouds of the sand flew in.

But he groped his way to the board and pulled the valve lever, when to his joy he found that the roasting heat had thawed the ice, allowing the valves to open.

The cylinder became filled with air.

That stopped her further progress over the ground, and she slid to the base of the dune, and laid motionless.

"All hands stand by to repair the windows!" shouted Jack.

His companions lost no time in obeying.

New panes were brought from the storeroom.

Cloud after cloud of the heated sand poured in, choking, blinding and irritating them.

But as fast as the new panes were put in, it was kept out, until at last no more could enter.

The fan motors were put in operation to cool the heated air, and then they waited for the storm to blow over.

They could hear the wind roaring outside and the sand rattling over the machine for some time.

Gradually, however, these sounds began to diminish until they sounded dull and smothered.

Finally it died away entirely.

Six hours had passed since they were first caught in the storm, and as they usually last about that length of time, Jack concluded that it had expended its fury.

He therefore went up into the pilothouse to look out.

The room was shrouded in dense gloom.

Approaching one of the windows, he peered through a loop hole.

The aperture was choked up with sand.

So was every one of the others.

Then he opened the door.

Hardly had he done so when a volume of the sand poured in.

Then he realized a most startling effect.

The storm had been heaping the sand upon the airship until she was literally buried beneath tons of it.

A startled cry burst from Jack.

It brought his friends up from below at a run.

"What's the matter? Anything happened?" cried Tim.

"We are buried alive!" cried Jack, pointing at the door.

"Shiminey Christmas," muttered Fritz. "Ve smudder in here soon!"

"I don't see how we are going to get out either," groaned Charley.

Their situation was desperate.

Unless something was done at once to relieve them, they would perish as soon as all the air in the boat was consumed.

Jack turned the situation over in his mind.

"I'm going to try to get her out of this!" he exclaimed, presently.

"Vot you do, Schack?" asked the Dutchman, dismally.

"You'll see, presently."

And so saying, the young inventor went down below.

In the storeroom he put on a close-fitting suit of aluminum.

It was furnished with helmet and knapsack, in which enough air was compressed to last a man several hours under water.

The suit was designed for sea-diving, and was one of the kind which the young inventor had frequently used before.

Having secured a number of hand grenades in a bag, Jack went upstairs with a piece of copper wire in his hand, the bag slung by a strap to his shoulder.

The air reservoir also contained a small, powerful electric battery to furnish light to a lamp on the helmet.

Going to the open door, Jack plunged into the sand head first.

He then began to burrow his way into it like a ground mole, and although he made but slow progress, he finally disappeared from the view of his anxious companions.

He worked his way along in this manner for the space of an hour, the air in the knapsack being admitted into the helmet by the tube gradually, so that he could breathe.

Keeping along the surface of the deck, he finally reached the rail.

Here his helmet emerged from the sand.

Then he stood up.

Glancing around, he observed that the airship was buried. It was necessary to get the sand away from her now.

In order to do this he had brought the bombs.

He planted one, with an end of the copper wire attached, and recoiling on top of the sand, he touched the other end of the wire to the helmet lamp battery.

With the explosion a vast quantity of the sand was blown into the air.

It cleared a space on the deck all the way to the wheel-house, and his friends were thus enabled to get out and assist him.

By the judicious distribution of the bombs, they finally cleared the boat of all the sand there was upon her.

She then was unwedged from it.

An examination of the machinery had shown them that one of the gear wheels of the shaft had broken, and they put in a new one.

Finding her free, Jack started the generators to operate the pump, the air was drawn from the cylinder, and to the joy of all hands the balloon ship rose in the air.

Up, up she ascended, the wind blowing all the loose sand off her, until she had attained an altitude of a mile.

Jack stopped her and started the screws.

As she shot ahead through the air he heard a faint cry down below, and depressed the searchlight.

A strange scene met his view.

The drag rope grapnel had caught a man and was carrying the yelling individual in the air with them.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SAILOR'S PERIL.

There clung the yelling individual several hundred feet below the balloon ship on the end of the rope.

He was clad in the garb of a Persian, and had seated himself on the grapnel and clutched the rope with both hands.

It was very evident that the poor wretch was very much frightened, and Jack was debating in his mind whether to hoist him up, or lower the airship, when Tim came in.

"We've picked up a stowaway," said Jack, pointing at the man.

"Good Lord!" laughed Tim. "Where did he hail from?"

"I can't imagine how we fished him."

"Wot yer goin' ter do about it?"

"Get rid of him by going down. We have gone over the border, and are crossing the swamps of Baluchistan, near Shah Jodaf."

"Goin' ter land ther lubber in ther village?"

"Yes, we may as well."

Jack shot the searchlight down, and it struck the earth below.

He let a small quantity of air into the cylinder gradually, and the airship was steered toward the village in her descent.

As she neared the earth, he saw a number of the natives in the village coming rushing into the streets.

They were shouting excitedly and pointing up at the balloon ship, the glowing lights of which were plainly seen.

"We've created a sensation among them," laughed Jack.

"Let ther stowaway down in thar midst."

Jack nodded and let the balloon ship keep descending.

Down went the drag rope with its human freight, and the moment it got close to the ground, the man jumped.

He landed in the midst of the excited throng.

Jack had stopped the wheels, but the air current they were in was drifting the drag rope over the ground.

The natives made a rush for it.

In a twinkling the course of the Eagle was checked, as a score of them seized the rope.

Then they began to pull the balloon ship down.

"Hello! See what they are doing, Tim?" said Jack.

"They wants a closer acquaintance, my lad."

"But I don't. They may destroy the Eagle."

"Wot shall we do?"

"Cut the rope."

Tim stumped out on deck and drew his knife.

By this time the Eagle had been hauled down to within a few feet of the ground by the excited throng below.

Tim gashed the rope.

It caused the men who were hanging on to it to fall on their backs, and relieved of the strain, the balloon ship shot up into the air.

Her ascent was so sudden that Tim was flung down.

Over the edge of the deck he rolled, and in an instant more he would have been precipitated to the ground, had he not flung out his hands and grasped the edge of the deck.

There he hung by his fingers, and the Eagle continued upward.

"Help! Help!" he roared.

No one heard him in their excitement.

The peril of the old sailor was extreme, for the least jar was liable to shake his grip loose.

His scant hair fairly rose on end with horror, for it was almost impossible to pull himself up to the deck.

"Save me!" he yelled.

Still, his hoarse cry was not heard.

Up higher and higher mounted the Eagle.

Jack dared not counteract her ascent by letting in air, for fear of injuring the machinery.

On the contrary, he started the air pump, giving her more buoyancy, so she would not suddenly drop down after she gained her equilibrium in the atmosphere.

Again Tim shouted.

This time Jack heard him.

"What's the matter?" he cried, looking out the door.

"Save me, Jack, or I'll perish!"

"Where the deuce are you?"

"Hangin' over the port scuppers!"

Jack rushed out on deck and peered over the rail.

He caught sight of the old sailor in the gloom and ran for him.

He was just in time.

In a few moments more the Eagle reached her equilibrium, and a shock went over her that might have shaken Tim from his precarious hold on the planks.

Jack seized him by the wrists just as the shock came.

He was very strong, and easily pulled the old sailor up.

Tim lay panting and puffing on the deck for a few moments bathed in cold perspiration.

"How in thunder did you get down there?" demanded Jack.

"Wuz knocked down by the rebound!" replied Tim.

"Oh, I see! Ah, we will go no higher now."

He returned to the wheel-house and Charley came out.

Glancing at the old sailor, he asked curiously:

"Didn't I hear you calling for help just now?"

"Ay, ay," replied Tim. "I jist fell overboard."

"How did you get back so quick?"

"By Jack's aid."

"But we are hundreds of feet from the ground."

"I know it. Yer see when I wuz over ther side and fell, my body struck a strong current o' air an' bounded up like a rubber ball. Jack see me a-flyin' through the air, an' steered ther Eagle so's I landed on her deck, an' ther plan succeeded."

"Hold on, Tim! Don't expect me to believe that."

And Charley was gone.

Taking advantage of a moment when Tim wasn't looking, he glided inside and left the old sailor talking to himself.

It made Tim as mad as a hornet.

He savagely bit off a piece of navy plug and followed the aeronaut.

On the following morning the Eagle crossed over the mountainous interior of Afghanistan, and reached the borders of Turkestan.

Below her was the great Tarim desert, to the north lay the great chain of the Muzart mountains in Tian-Shan.

The airship was going over a section of the world in Central Asia, that few civilized white men have ever seen.

She sped along rapidly all that day and into the following night until she hovered over the great desert of Shamo.

Below her laid the valley of the Eleuth tribes, between Mingan and Hami.

It was a bleak, cold country, rising high in a great table-land.

The people were mostly herders, and were governed by a class of priests called lamas, all of whom are so much opposed to the white race, that they are prohibited from entering the country.

Jack steered the Eagle toward Hami.

It was so dry and bitterly cold that the airship became heavily coated with hoar frost and our friends had to don extra clothing.

A deep gloom had settled down.

To remain at a high altitude from the ground was impossible without suffering the rigors of an Arctic climate, and Jack let the flying machine down to within a short distance of the earth.

She was going over a bleak, barren tract of pasture ground when the young inventor caught sight of a number of men ahead of him in skin clothing.

They were a queer, dark featured race, thin, bony, wearing full beards and high peaked hats, carried sticks, and were going along toward the distant village.

As the airship drew closer to the lonely travelers going on through the dusk of the night, a most singular event occurred that startled Jack beyond all measure.

CHAPTER XVII.

AROUND THE WORLD IN THE SKY.

The men Jack was watching seemed to have been engaged in conversation, when all at once long streaks of fire shot from all over them in blinding flashes.

Every one of the band was enveloped in the flashing flames, but seemed to pay no heed to it, for they kept on talking and continued on their way as if nothing extraordinary was occurring.

"Great heavens! What sort of beings do you call those men?" asked Charley, as he glared out at the shepherds.

"I've seen this thing before," Jack replied. "It isn't very wonderful."

"You must be used to miracles."

"This is a natural phenomenon common in this region."

"How do you account for the fire?"

"It is electricity."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"But what generates it?"

"The air loses its conducting power, and when the people dressed in sheepskins approach conducting substances, their clothing gives out those long electric sparks. Hairy skin has a great affinity for electricity. Stroke a cat's fur the reverse way in the dark, and you will find it gives out electric sparks."

Just then the Tibetans were startled by the searchlight blazing out upon them, and glancing around, saw the Eagle.

A prolonged howl escaped them.

Jack and his companion burst out laughing at their superstitious fears, and as the airship continued on, they soon left the natives astern of the boat.

The young inventor soon made a startling discovery though,

that was ultimately destined to change the course of their route.

All the lights suddenly were extinguished.

The machinery began to work spasmodically going at one moment and stopping the next in the most singular manner.

"We are being affected by the dryness of the atmosphere," remarked Jack, quickly apprehending the cause of the trouble.

"I don't see how that could trouble us," said Charley.

"You saw the shepherd's clothing?"

"Oh, you mean the electricity?"

"Yes. The air is full of it."

"Can't we get out of it?"

"Only by ascending."

"Go up, by all means, then."

Jack lost no time in doing so, for as the generators had been so badly affected he was obliged to switch on the extra current of the auto-accumulators to get power for the air pump.

The ship soared skyward instantly.

The air was filled with fine, icy needles that stung like fire, obliging the young inventor to close the window.

In a few moments a coating of ice several inches thick covered the balloon ship, and she was swiftly borne off to the southward in the fearful current.

"We are in for it now," ruefully said Jack.

"Where do currents vos taken us?" queried the fat fellow.

"Over the Mediterranean."

"Jerusalem!" gasped Tim, looking at the log. "One hundred and forty miles an hour! Wot sort of a current is this, lad?"

"Heaven only knows. I have a mind to let it carry us and see where it goes. This is a phenomenon worth examining. Don't you notice how much like the currents of the sea are the currents of the air? In the ocean we have the swift, warm Gulf Stream—in the air this cold Polar current."

The machinery worked properly where they then floated.

The thermometer registered at five above zero at their former altitude, but the spirits of wine now ran down thirty degrees.

As long as they went along with the wind they did not feel the intense cold, but the heat radiated from the machinery, electricity, themselves, and other causes, covered the Eagle with great icicles.

The four decided to let the wind carry them, as no inconvenience was felt, and they were swept along all night.

On the following day they were across the Mediterranean, and below them saw the African continent.

Three days afterward the Cape of Good Hope was left behind, and the airship followed a southwesterly course across the Atlantic, and finally reached the South Orkney Islands.

From there she went on the great barrier cliffs, and reaching Palmer Land, shot across the South Shetland Islands.

A long chain of cliffs were seen.

The Eagle kept following them until Emperor Alexander Land was met and the southern globe of the pole was passed.

The velocity, temperature, and direction of the wind did not abate.

So great was their elevation, and so dense the mists that overhung the icy land below that nothing was seen of it.

When the airship began to go northward on the side of the earth opposite that by which she had gone to the south, Jack and his companions reached a strange conclusion.

It was to the effect that this tremendous polar current into which they were carried, described a circle through the atmosphere around the earth at a height of 80,000 feet.

"What water is that below us?" asked Charley.

"The South Pacific Ocean."

While they ran through a strata of atmosphere, above which there was no vapor, they could frequently see the furious movement of the clouds below them and observe a heavy fall of rain or snow going on.

At times the sun heated the airship until it became uncomfortable, its rays lighting up one side of it and leaving the other side in shadow.

A week passed by uneventfully.

Without our friends feeling the slightest movement of the Eagle, she was plunging through space at the same high rate of speed at which she had started.

In due time the Pacific was left behind the airship, and they were carried over the land between the enormous mountains of St. Elias and Fairweather, towering over 14,970 feet in the air.

The close proximity of these enormous peaks at first deceived them into the belief that they were descending.

As soon as they were passed, however, and the valley, lying between the coast range of Alaska and the Rocky Mountains beyond, sunk away below them, they saw their error.

The winding course of the Yukon river was plainly traced below, and swiftly borne along, the Eagle was swept out over the Arctic sea above Mackenzie Bay.

She maintained her lofty elevation until the Siberian coast was reached, and the wind carried her inland.

Here the magnetic influence was lost, and she was on the point of mounting into the cold upper regions when a terrible report rang out overhead.

The cylinder had burst.

A terrible noise ensued.

In an instant more the boat's buoyancy was lost.

She gave an awful downward plunge, and in a moment more shot through the air like a meteor.

Every one aboard of her was thrilled with the horrible thought that as soon as she struck the earth she would be dashed to pieces.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE JAPANESE JUNKS.

There came a terrible crash when the balloon ship struck, and it seemed for an instant to her occupants as if she were smashed.

They were knocked flying in all directions.

Bumped and banged all over, they were partially stunned. Jack was least hurt and quickest to recover.

He bounded to his feet, and to his surprise found that water was pouring into the ship through an open port.

With one spring he reached the bull's-eye and closed it.

The airship lay on her side and was moving up and down.

Every one was upon the wall of the port side of the vessel, and the young inventor climbed up into the pilothouse.

The Eagle had reached the coast of Cape Tchelyuskin, swept down it at an angle through a pass parting the Byranga mountains, and had plunged into Lake Taimur.

Although the shock had demolished a great many articles in the airship, the water had so cushioned her that the hull was intact.

The result was that the ship was uninjured.

The crack in the cylinder was several feet long, and was on top of it as it floated. Had it been on the starboard side, the water would have poured in, filled it, and sinking, the boat would have been turned upside down by its weight.

Altogether, bad as the case was, they had a lucky escape.

"The contraction of the metal caused by the cold must have made the cylinder burst," thought Jack.

Fritz and Charley now came up from the cabin.

They were not very favorably impressed with their position.

Jack started the screw lever, but found that the machinery did not work, as the fall had injured it.

"We will have to work it by hand, boys," he remarked.

"I am a good swimmer," said Charley. "If you will fasten a line to my body I'll swim ashore with it and pull her in."

This was a practical manner of getting out of the difficulty.

They carried out the plan.

It was a frightfully cold swim.

But the plucky fellow finally finished it.

He then hauled the boat ashore by means of the line.

So intense was the cold that our friends resolved to get the airship on her keel as soon as possible.

Accordingly, she was towed beside a cliff.

Here a line was secured to the cylinder and run up to a block fastened to the top of the cliff.

By this means they hauled the cylinder up until the boat rode on her keel beneath it, after which they went inside.

There they remained until the following day.

Having made themselves perfectly comfortable, and repaired all the damage done to the interior of the Eagle, a day passed by.

On the following day they took out the bursted plates in the cylinder, and as there was plenty of material aboard, set in new ones.

It occupied several days to finish this task.

The boat was then found to be as capable as she was before the accident occurred, and they started her off in the air.

She majestically arose several hundred feet and then paused.

Jack started the screws, and as she flew through the freezing air, he steered her for the southeastward.

The log register had kept a correct tally of all the movements of the airship, and as Jack glanced at the dial he observed that it now marked a total distance traversed since leaving Wrightstown of 20,000 leagues.

The Eagle sped away toward Lake Baikal, and finally swept over the Chinese Empire in the Mongolian district, from whence she ran down to Korea on the Japanese sea.

From there she pursued a northerly course toward the Gulf of Tartary.

The weather had become oppressively warm, and the cool upper regions of the atmosphere were kept.

One afternoon the weather changed.

Great fog banks swept over the sea and shore, and Jack was just upon the point of raising the balloon ship above the mist when a shout from Tim out on deck arrested his attention.

"There's a Yankee steamer being attacked by Japanese junks."

Jack lowered the Eagle into the fog.

He realized at once that the vessel in question might stand in need of assistance, or Tim would not have called on him.

The airship swooped down like a bird of prey through the fog, and soon opened up the sea below.

Here Jack caught sight of a steamship in a badly disabled condition, running through La Perouse Strait, hotly pursued by half a dozen great, clumsy junks, swarming with Japanese.

The steamer had been crippled by a number of gunshots, and opened up the sea beyond the fog banks ahead of the junks, which had now drawn close to her.

As soon as the native vessels cleared the fog, the big old-

fashioned guns mounted upon their decks, were put in operation again.

The steamer's machinery was damaged by an unlucky shot.

Up to her rushed the junks, and over the steamer's side poured the pirates, engaging the sailors in a hand-to-hand conflict.

There were several female passengers on the vessel, upon whom the pirates seized and carried aboard of one of the junks.

Never expecting such an attack, the peaceful crew of the steamer were poorly armed to meet the assault of the pirates.

Tim, Charley and Fritz hastily armed themselves with a large number of grenades and fired them down at the junks.

The explosions were terrific.

They began to rend the junks to pieces.

As soon as the rascals caught sight of the airship attacking them they ceased hostilities as quick as magic.

Back to their own vessels they rushed, and casting loose from the steamer, drifted away.

Fast and furious fell the bombs upon them, and two of the vessels sunk, leaving their crews swimming on the surface.

Jack saw that they were so demoralized by the strange attack that they would leave the steamer alone now, and catching sight of the junk on which the females were carried, he pursued it.

Down toward the fugitive junk rushed the Eagle.

The vessel was some distance ahead.

Upon her deck lay four females, bound hand and foot.

They were guarded by a large number of the pirates.

As soon as the natives saw the dreaded airship in pursuit of them, they made every effort to get away from it.

But it was a useless attempt.

The Eagle soon overhauled her.

Down went a number of the bombs again, and then the terrified rascals abandoned all hope and rushed below decks.

Down dropped the airship beside the junk.

The next moment Charley sprang aboard of her deck, followed by Fritz, and they severed the bonds of the ladies and rushed them back to the deck of the Eagle.

As soon as they were aboard Jack sent her up in the air again.

The women were all weeping and terrified, but as soon as they realized that they were rescued, their courage revived.

Charley began to size them up.

As his glance fell upon the youngest of the four he uttered a wild cry of surprise and sprang toward her.

"Fanny Fairfax!" cried the aeronaut.

The girl turned as pale as death and held her trembling hands out to him.

"Merciful heaven!" she gasped, in astonishment. "Is it Charley?"

The girl was the aeronaut's sweetheart whom he had left in New York nearly two years before.

He rushed to her and clasped her in his arms.

"You do not believe me guilty of the crime Roger Harcourt charged me with?" he asked, in pleading, anxious tones.

"Oh, Charley, why did you ever leave me?" she cried, in tones of reproach. "I never believed you guilty."

"Thank God for that assurance!" fervently cried the young man.

And he imprinted a kiss upon her lips that sealed their past pledges of devotion to each other, and they went aside.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOMeward BOUND.

Those of the Japanese pirates' junks that were not sunk drifted away, and Jack steered the Eagle over to the disabled steamer.

Here three of the ladies were returned aboard, but Fanny Fairfax resolved to accept Jack's invitation to remain on the airship.

The steamer could be repaired, and as there was no prospect of the pirates returning to attack her, Jack steered the airship up northward, toward the Sea of Okhotsk.

In the meantime he had been told by Charley who the girl was, and the young man had shown her the two letters and will Jack had found in his father's pocket, and told her of Percy Clifton's fate.

It vindicated him clearly.

Then the girl said:

"I was so harassed by Harcourt's attentions after your father so wrongly drove you from home that I fled. Securing a position as governess for the children of the American minister to China. I started with them for that country from San Francisco, when the pirates attacked us."

"What a pity, when Harcourt holds a fortune of half a million in trust for you," said Charley.

"I don't care. I hated him, and wanted to escape his persecutions. I have some news for you."

"To what do you refer?"

"He found that your father went crazy, and was taking him to a private asylum. On the railroad your father attacked him and flung him from the train. It was afterwards ascertained by Harcourt that your father vanished in Wrightstown."

"That was when he ascended in this airship, and then committed suicide," said Charley.

"Doubtless. At any rate, Harcourt was nearly killed. He finally recovered. Now I firmly believe he intends to seize your father's money and interest in the banking business."

"Never while I have this to prove my claims," cried Charley, as he held up his father's will.

Jack had decided to cross the north Pacific to Alaska, run down the coast as far as California, then cross the continent for home.

"We have encircled the globe from pole to pole, and half completed an equatorial girdle of it," he remarked to his friends, "to say nothing of the large amount of inland travel. And I have made some very valuable discoveries in the cause of science by the journey."

According to the programme Jack laid out, the airship was steered across the sea, and two days afterward she reached the coast and steered for the southward.

"I'm glad to be over American soil once more," remarked Charley to Tim, who was steering that morning. "It fills my mind with the work I've got to perform when I reach New York."

Just then the dinner bell rang, and Charley skipped downstairs, for Tim was about to begin another yarn.

The balloon ship soon reached the vicinage of San Francisco and Jack turned her into the great eastern current when she begun her journey across the continent.

The young inventor kept the airship within a short distance of the ground now, and she made rapid headway.

Her appearance excited the most intense astonishment everywhere she went, and crowds followed her for miles, thinking she was coming down.

As she sped along toward the Rocky Mountains late in the afternoon a tremendous racket arose from the cabin.

Fritz had started a racket between the monkey and the parrot, and Whiskers was getting a tremendous whipping from Bismarck.

The bird and beast went at it like fury, and the monkey became so encouraged by the appearance of Tim who came to just then, that he turned the tables, and began to get the best of the parrot.

Seeing the tide of the battle changing, Bismarck discreetly flew upstairs.

Away rushed the monkey after him, and Tim and Fritz brought up the rear.

Out on deck flew the parrot, and uttering a rasping shriek, he flew overboard and went fluttering down to the ground.

"Himmel!" yelled Fritz. "Man ohferboard! Man ohferboard!"

"What's that?" cried Jack, in alarm.

"I mean parrot ohferboard!" cried Fritz. "Stop der poat or ve lost him."

Jack complied, and let the Eagle descend to the ground.

The parrot had landed in a clear space near a wood, and Fritz lowered the ladder and hastily went over the side.

Bismarck was some distance away.

The Dutchman ran back after him, and the bird saw him coming and flew for the wood.

After him rushed Fritz at the top of his speed.

The bird seemed to be determined to keep out of his clutches, for it rushed along, every moment uttering a squawk until it finally reached the woods.

There it disappeared among the trees and bushes.

Into the woods ran Fritz, aggravated intensely by the parrot's persistence to escape him.

Jack and Tim had run out on deck.

They saw the Dutchman vanish in the gloomy woods, and were just about to burst out laughing over the chase the bird was leading him, when they heard a wild, unearthly yell.

It was instantly followed by the voice of Fritz, screaming:

"Safe me! Safe me! Helb! Helb! Helb!"

A thrill of alarm passed over his friends.

"Something has happened to him!" said Jack.

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

Jack and the sailor hastily armed themselves, alighted from the Eagle and rushed toward the spot where Fritz had disappeared in the woods.

The Dutchman's yells for help continued.

Plunging in among the trees, Jack's attention was at once attracted by a tremendous scuffling sound amongst the shrubbery.

A short distance further in a sight met his glance that made his blood run cold.

Fritz was struggling fiercely with a huge puma.

The beast was about five feet long, with a thick, close fur, of reddish-brown color, lighter at the sides, its muzzle, throat and insides of the legs a grayish-white fur.

Over and over rolled the man and the beast upon the ground in their battle for life, Fritz pluckily determined to get the best of it.

"Great Scott!" gasped the sailor. "It will tear him ter pieces!"

"Don't fire from here, or you may kill him."

"Lord no! But we've got ter do somethin', Jack."

"I'll fix the brute!"

And so saying, Jack rushed up to it, intending to get close enough to blow its brains out.

Just then, however, the beast tore itself away from Fritz.

It leaped back, and crouched down, as if about to spring at him again, when Jack raised his rifle and fired.

The ball crashed into the monster's brain just as it bounded into the air.

A loud explosion ensued, which was echoed by a frightful roar from the beast, and its head was fairly blown to pieces.

It fell to the ground at Jack's feet.

Fritz arose and approached his friends.

"Mein Gott! Vot a tomcat!" he gasped.

"Were you hurt?" asked Jack, of Fritz.

"Hurded? Holy chee! Do yer think a cat's could cut a teller all ober mit its claws, und not hurt him? Vhy, Shack, I feel me dot like some vun took ohf mein glodings und rub me all ohfer mit sandpaper."

"Let's return to the airship then, and attend to your injuries."

They retraced their steps to the Eagle.

Charley and the girl were standing on deck, anxiously awaiting their return, and when our friends boarded the airship, they gave the aeronaut an account of Fritz's adventure.

The Dutchman jammed the parrot in its cage, and then went down below to attend to his injuries.

Jack then raised the airship.

She sped along once more, and on the following morning cleared the mountains and drifted across the plains.

Several more adventures occurred to our friends on their way to the eastward, but want of space precludes the possibility of giving an account of them.

Suffice it that in due time the balloon ship finally reached the village of Wrightstown and descended.

It was on a beautiful afternoon when she finally settled down toward the open roof of the shop she had come from.

Our friends then alighted.

The first persons to meet and greet them were Jack's charming wife and son.

Whiskers and Bismarck were taken into the house.

Here a splendid repast was prepared for the voyagers, and when they had made themselves presentable, they all sat down to the board.

Jack's wife was given an account of their adventures.

She had taken a strong fancy to Fanny Fairfax, and the young girl found her just such a friend as she needed at this crisis.

It was then decided between Jack and Charley that they should go to New York together the next day, get married, and call Roger Harcourt to account.

This was subsequently done, the girl accompanying them from the minister's house to the banker's place of business.

They found the man in his office.

He was intensely startled to see Charley and Fanny.

Bounding from his chair, he glared at them a moment in silence, and then cried, in sullen tones:

"I thought you were both dead."

"Wished it, you mean!" replied the aeronaut.

"How do you dare say that?"

"Because our fortunes are both in your hands, and you probably expected to retain them, once we were out of your way."

"What? You accuse me of this?"

"I do. I want an accounting for my wife."

"Your wife?" gasped Harcourt, turning pale.

"Fanny Fairfax and I were married to-day. See her wedding ring?"

"Great heavens!"

"My father is dead——"

"Dead!"

"Yes. I inherit his private fortune."

"But he sold his business to me ere he——"

"You lie!"

"Sir!"

"Here is this will to prove that he left it to me."

Charlie showed the rascally schemer the paper.

Harcourt was fairly dumfounded.

"You forget the forged check——" he began, maliciously.

"It was you who made it."

"Recollect! Your father accused you."

"Just read this letter."

He thrust the paper over to the man and Harcourt read it.

His face changed color, and he sank back into his seat, for it was clear enough that Percy Clifton believed that he had been guilty of the fraud to get rid of his rival.

"Let the matter drop," he said. "You and I cannot get along in this business together. You buy me out, or I'll buy you out."

Name your price.

Harcourt did so.

Charley sold out to him.

The matter was finally adjusted in a satisfactory manner, and then Harcourt was forced to restore to Fanny the fortune he held in trust for her.

This done they left him.

Percy Clifton's will was filed for probate.

Suffice it that it was admitted in due course of time, and both Charley and his wife came into possession of their inheritances.

It made them both wealthy.

Jack returned to Wrightstown when the evidence of Clifton's death, which he had furnished, was given.

The young inventor had been not only satisfied with his great journey through the heavens, but was pleased with the termination of affairs for Charley and his wife.

Most of Jack's time was devoted to the invention of the mechanical wonders that had in the past afforded him great profit and a vast amount of amusement.

He, therefore, did not lose any time now to devise a new contrivance, and the result of his labors finally exceeded his most sanguine expectations when he first began.

The plans of a most wonderful invention were soon drawn up, and upon consultation with Tim and Fritz, he resolved to begin the construction of the machine.

It was accordingly done.

Considerable time and money were spent.

But in the end Jack had one of the most extraordinary inventions he had ever devised before.

It was destined to be a source of great amusement, and the means of bringing him and his friends into a series of the most thrilling adventures they ever met with.

It is impossible to give the details of Jack's new invention here, or tell what occurred to them when they used it.

The recital is reserved for another story about the three friends, which will soon follow this one, and until it appears we must leave them.

THE END.

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